



BLUE AND GRAY WEEKLY



Stories of Brave Northern and Southern Boys in the Civil War.

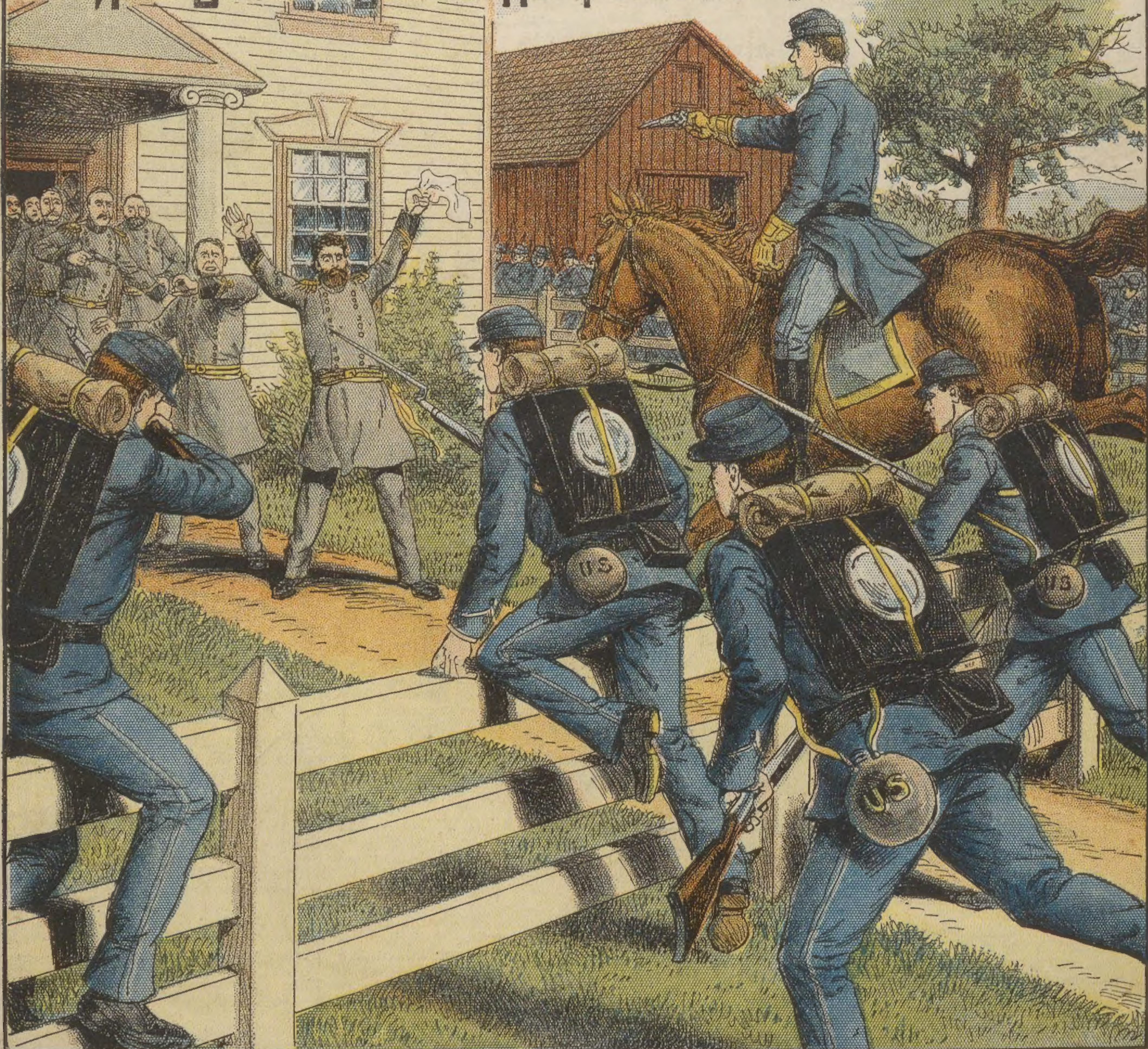
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No. 19.

NEW YORK, DECEMBER 16, 1904.

Price 5 Cents.

CHASING THE ENEMY ; OR, THE BOYS IN BLUE IN HOT PURSUIT. *By LIEUT HARRY LEE.*



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(Continued on page 3 of cover.)

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CHASING THE ENEMY;

OR,

The Boys in Blue in Hot Pursuit.

By LIEUT. HARRY LEE.

CHAPTER I.

A STRANGE APPOINTMENT.

The Union army under General Halleck was advancing upon Corinth. The great battle of Pittsburg Landing had been desperately fought and won by Grant and Sherman. In the course of the great civil war no battle had more far-reaching effects than this one.

Grant had been severely condemned for having taken many desperate chances in the battle. He had been superseded by Halleck, who, history tells us, was just as much too slow and cautious.

For over six weeks he advanced his army but fifteen miles toward Corinth, the stronghold of the Confederates. But, in justice, it should be said that the army was sadly in need of reorganization and drilling.

But at last the Union advance had arrived within three miles of the Confederate fortifications, and preparations were made for storming them. A great battle was threatened.

The incidents of this story will deal with the brave deeds and exciting adventures of a company of youths, banded

together and serving under General Grant's special attention, who were known as the Fairdale Blues.

They had been organized in the pretty little town of Fairdale, New York. Their young captain was Jack Clark, the son of Homer Clark, a wealthy man of the town.

Jack Clark had left his college studies to organize the Blues. Patriotic spirit was high in all parts of the North at that time, and volunteers were plentiful to take up arms for the Union.

The Blues hastened to Washington and quickly went to the front. They distinguished themselves at the battle of Bull Run, and took part in other lesser battles in Virginia. But finally, at their own request, they were transferred to the West.

Here, at Fort Donelson and at Shiloh, they had fought valiantly. They enjoyed the utmost confidence of General Grant.

Now that the army was within a few miles of Corinth, the Blues were in the vanguard and ready to attack the town with the rest.

One day in the latter part of May, 1862, Captain Jack Clark, of the Blues, in company with his young lieutenant, Hal Martin, was riding along an unfrequented road in front of the enemy's lines.

Their purpose was that of reconnoitering the enemy's works. They galloped along lightly, until finally they began to ascend a little eminence. From this they hoped to get a good view of the country beyond.

On the summit was a small clump of trees. Not until they were well into the little forest did they discover that it was too thick and also too steep for the horses to go further.

So they dismounted and hitched their horses to trees. Then they went forward on foot.

But they had not gone far when voices came to their ears. Hal gave a sudden start and drew Jack back behind a tree.

"Hold on!" he whispered. "Don't go any further!"

"What's the matter?" asked Jack, in surprise.

"I saw a Confederate uniform."

Jack was startled. In a moment he also caught the color of a gray uniform in the distance through the foliage.

The two young officers looked at each other.

"What's up?" muttered Jack. "Have the Confederates occupied this hill?"

"It can't be. It is only just outside our picket line."

This was true. If any considerable force of the Confederates was in the vicinity the fact would certainly be known to the Union pickets.

Somewhat reassured, but exceedingly curious to know what it all meant, the boys pushed ahead cautiously. The foliage was dense and offered a good screen for them.

In a few moments they came upon a scene which startled them. For a moment Jack rubbed his eyes to make sure that he was not dreaming.

In the little open space among the trees was a Confederate colonel, with a guard of a score of Confederate soldiers in the background. He was a tall, well-built man, with features, however, which were not altogether prepossessing. His eyes were deep set and crafty, and his mouth had cruel lines about it.

Before him stood a young lieutenant, dressed in Union blue. He was handsome and straight as an arrow. At the moment, with bared head, he stood listening to the remarks of the other officer. Every word uttered was plainly heard by Jack and Hal Martin.

"It shall be as you say, Lieutenant Cameron. I will acquaint my niece with your decision. She will certainly appreciate your interest in her."

The young lieutenant's face was pale and set. It could be seen that he was in great distress of mind.

"Colonel Wardell, you know how deeply I regard your niece, Miss Myrtle Vane. I have the deepest respect and admiration for her. But I am a Union soldier, and to be disloyal to my country and its cause is an utter impossibility."

"I respect you for your sentiments, so far as that goes,"

said the Confederate colonel. "But I fail to see wherein this is disloyalty, in the strict sense of the term."

"It is cheating my Government of its right to administer justice."

"Justice? Ay, there's the point! If it were justice, I would say no more. If my son was really a spy, then I would give him up without further argument. But I know that he is not a spy. He is entitled to the treatment of a prisoner of war."

"Yet, Colonel Wardell, you should know that it is beyond my power to arrest the sentence passed upon him."

"I say it is not!"

"Wait! Let us go over the matter again. Your son, Jackson Wardell, was captured in General Buell's tent, trying to steal papers from his table. He was in the disguise of a Union soldier at the time. His identity was probed, and he was placed under arrest. Papers were found upon him incriminating him as a spy. He has been sentenced to death. How can I help him?"

"You can and must!" fumed Wardell. "That boy must not be shot as a spy! Now, I know that you love my niece, Myrtle Vane. If you ever hope to win her you must come to my terms. Not until my son has been released from that wretched imprisonment will she look with favor upon your suit!"

Jack Clark's bosom rose and fell with pent-up excitement. This was to him a thrilling revelation.

He knew the young officer, Frank Cameron, well. He listened with interest to what ensued. Cameron was even more pale, and his figure trembled with suppressed emotion.

"Is it her wish that I should do what you ask of me?"

"It is!"

"I cannot believe it! I would only believe it when I heard the words from her lips!"

"Well, believe or not, as you choose," said the colonel, in a surly way. "I want to know if you will help me to save my son?"

"I will help you in any way that is within reason," replied Cameron. "But I fear my efforts would be fruitless. What is your plan?"

The Confederate colonel's face grew bright. Hope seemed to shine in his eyes. He drew a step nearer, and said:

"Frank Cameron, you cannot know the real depth of a father's love for his son. I know my boy Jack has his faults, but still he is my flesh and blood, and it would bring my head in sorrow to the grave to know that he was shot as a spy."

"Colonel Wardell, I am sorry for you," said Lieutenant Cameron, with feeling. "I trust you will believe that I am willing to do all in my power for you, that is, consistent with honor."

Colonel Wardell bit his lip.

"Your definition of honor may not meet mine," he said. "Are you willing to aid in freeing my son?"

"I will intercede with General Grant to my utmost."

"Bah! that will not do! You cannot save him in that way!"

"What do you wish me to do?"

Colonel Wardell stepped nearer. There was a queer ring in his voice:

"The military prison where he is confined is just in the verge of Shiloh," he said. "It is but a collection of tents, surrounded by an armed guard. I ask only that you will admit me and a score of my men through the picket line at that point. We will be disguised as Union soldiers. You have the countersign. You may then leave the rest to us, for we can make a dash and release Jack and get away before the guard can be reinforced. Now this is an easy matter and perfectly safe for you."

Frank Cameron compressed his lips.

"Is that your opinion?"

"It is!"

"Well, it is not mine! What more treacherous act could be charged to me? How would I explain my conduct to my superiors afterward? What could I say to them?"

"You could swear that you thought we were a detail and had a right to enter the lines."

"And swear to a lie! Again, upon whose head would be the blood spilled?—for you would shoot down the guards. Would I not be a traitor?"

There was a moment of silence.

"Well," snarled the Confederate colonel, "it is plain that you are willing to make no sacrifice for Myrtle. She will hardly care to regard you in other than the light of an enemy. That you will refuse to aid in the saving of her cousin's life at a very slight expenditure of effort and straining of conscience on your part shows how little you really care for her."

"Colonel Wardell," said Lieutenant Cameron, forcibly, "I have come here to-night to meet you at great risk. If it were known that I had kept an appointment with a Confederate officer outside our lines it would be very hard for me, indeed, to give satisfactory explanation. I have done this, for you assured me that it was her appeal. I cannot believe that she wishes me to sacrifice my honor and my trust, as you propose. If she does, then I am disappointed in her, for not for you nor for the girl I love, no, not for my life, would I commit the treacherous act you propose. I will intercede for your son with General Grant. It is not in my power to do more."

Colonel Wardell's face flamed angrily.

"Then we cut away from you forever!" he cried. "Never show your face at Belle View again. My niece will meet you hereafter only as a stranger. If this is the way you will requite the favors we have shown you in the past, we can take no other step. I make one last appeal."

The young lieutenant seemed to waver an instant, but shook his head. With an angry imprecation Wardell turned to his company:

"Attention! Shoulder arms! Right wheel! March!"

The little file of soldiers in gray passed away through the trees, the Confederate colonel following, with his sword and scabbard held in his right hand.

For some moments the young Union lieutenant stood like a statue, looking after them. Then he turned with precision and strode away toward the lines.

His face was pale and rigid. Jack Clark felt a thrill of pity, but it was outweighed by his sense of admiration for the young lieutenant's strict loyalty. Against his friends, against the girl he loved, he had staked honor and truth and his country's flag. In Jack Clark's eyes he was a genuine hero. But he did not reveal his presence to him.

CHAPTER II.

THE RECONNOISSANCE.

Lieutenant Cameron passed out of sight in the direction of the Union lines. Jack and Hal stepped out of their concealment.

Jack recalled well the circumstances attending the arrest of Jackson Wardell. He was known to be the son of a colonel of a Mississippi regiment. Upon his person had been found tell-tale papers.

He was a spy!

He had been given an impartial hearing and sentenced to be shot. But upon the appeal of Lieutenant Cameron, his execution had been temporarily deferred.

Not until now, though, had Captain Clark known Cameron's reasons for this move.

It is hardly necessary to say that Jack Clark's bosom thrilled with sympathy for Frank Cameron. He had no sympathy for the spy, Wardell.

Cameron had once told Jack Clark that he had friends in that part of Mississippi. Not a dozen miles from Corinth was a beautiful and lordly estate of the Southern type, known as Belle View. It was the property of Colonel James Wardell.

Myrtle Vane was the niece of Wardell, he being her guardian. At an Eastern college Jackson Wardell and Cameron had been classmates. In this way a friendship had sprung up between them, though Cameron was soon obliged to terminate it, on account of Wardell's villainous and dissipated character.

But young Cameron had visited Belle View before the war, and met Myrtle Vane. A warm friendship had sprung up between them, which ripened into affection.

Jack Clark was familiar with these facts, and now related them explanatively to Hal Martin.

"Quite a romance," said the young lieutenant. "It was a hard position to place young Cameron in. Really, I feel deep respect for him."

"He is entitled to it," said Jack. "But—if Myrtle Vane is a true girl she will not discard him for it."

"I don't believe she will."

"Nor I."

"You say young Wardell is not deserving of pity—that he merits his fate?"

"He does. In any event it is too late to save him now."

Jack and Hal might have called out a detachment and possibly cut off the Confederate colonel and his men, but they did not do so.

Jack and Hal went back to the camp of the Blues. They discussed the incident just recorded, until suddenly an incident occurred to divert their interest for the time.

An orderly came riding down to the tent of the young captain, and saluted.

"Captain Clark?"

"Yes," replied Jack.

"General Halleck sends you sealed orders." He handed Jack an envelope. The young captain took it.

"There is no answer required," said the orderly, and, saluting, he rode away. Jack took the packet and went into his tent.

He opened it and saw that it contained a number of maps and an autograph letter. The latter he proceeded at once to read, as follows:

"My Dear Clark:—It has just occurred to me that you are the man I need for a very important reconnoitering trip about Corinth. I have received word from an absolutely reliable source that Beauregard is about to make a move of some secret sort, and on a large scale. It is important for me to know what it is. My scouts are not able to ascertain, for they cannot get past the double guard of Confederate pickets. But I believe that you can learn by securing horses and mounting your command and then riding around his right wing of defenses. I enclose you an order for horses herewith and request you to undertake this commission and report to me what you are able to learn, within three hours, if possible. Do not even inform your own men of your purpose. Proceed with utmost secrecy. Signed: HALLECK, General Comm'd'g."

Jack folded the letter and placed it in the inner pocket of his jacket. He scanned the maps a moment.

Then, with quick step, he went to the tent entrance. Corporal Tom Peters was just passing.

"Corporal Peters!"

The corporal saluted at once.

"I wish you to take this order to the cavalry quartermaster and see that he fills it,"

"All right, captain."

Peters hastened away as fast as possible. It was a great surprise to him, but he asked no questions.

"Lieutenant Martin," said Jack, as he called to Hal, "give the men orders to fall in. We are to have horses and make a reconnoitering trip, by General Halleck's orders. Say nothing about this to anyone."

Hal's face brightened, and he said:

"I am glad to know it, captain. We are getting rusty lying here. The men shall fall in at once."

So the Blues were called into line. In a few moments the stable squad brought up the horses. The Blues donned sabres, and discarded their muskets temporarily for carbines.

They were soon ready and in the saddle. It was not the first time they had been called upon to change from infantry to cavalry, and they were equal to the occasion.

With Jack Clark at their head they now rode quietly out of the lines. In a little while they were well out on the Corinth road.

When once beyond their own picket lines Jack changed his course to the east. He knew that this was the proper course to take to ride around the right wing of the Corinth defenses.

The young captain knew well the enormity of the risk he was taking.

He knew that the intervening region was full of deadly pitfalls. At any moment they might be ambushed by a superior force.

On rode the Blues, however, for some miles without incident.

The region through which they rode had been made desolate by the iron heel of war.

Buildings were in ashes, fields were torn and trampled, every living thing had departed. It was a scene of desolation and woe.

Far off on the horizon were the works of the Confederate army, extending for miles. Behind those ramparts lurked the wily foe. In the muzzles of those long rows of cannon was death.

Jack kept videttes out far ahead of their line of march. He threw out light wings on either side also.

But not until they had almost turned the right flank of the enemy's works did they come upon any startling adventure.

Then, suddenly, over a little hill to the right, there flashed the guidon of a company of cavalry.

Jack saw it first, and he knew what was coming. Quick as a flash he wheeled his little troop into a grove of oaks.

"Dismount!" he ordered. "Horses to the rear!"

The order was obeyed with quickness and precision. The Blues deployed in the shelter of the oaks.

They were not a moment too soon. Over the eminence

rode the Confederate cavalymen. They halted, and at once firing began.

The bullets whistled sharply among the trees, but the Blues, lying flat, were quite well protected, while the Confederate horsemen above made a splendid target. They began to drop from their saddles rapidly.

"They won't stand that long, Jack," said Hal Martin.

"No; we'll receive them with open arms in a few moments."

Of course it was the only course left open for the Confederates. They must charge. So their line spread out rapidly and their horses were taken back over the summit of the hill. To have charged down that steep on horseback would have been fatal.

So on they came on foot. Jack Clark's steady voice reassured the Blues.

"Keep your nerve, boys! Wait for them! Now! Ready! Fire!"

A volley swept the ranks of the foe and staggered them. One more volley drove them back.

It was now Jack's turn. Springing up, he flourished his sword, and cried:

"Forward, Blues! Charge!"

If the boys had their bayonets they might have effectually dispersed the foe. But with their carbines they fired a last volley, and then rushed upon them with their sabres.

Over the summit of the hill they chased the Confederates. Dozens of them lay dead and wounded on the slope. The survivors mounted their horses and rode away.

It was a complete victory for the Blues. The repulse had been effectual. The Confederate horsemen did not return to the attack.

Instead, they rode out of sight to the southward.

Jack did not pursue them. He called his men back and formed them in line on the summit of the hill, while parties were detached to bury the dead and care for the wounded.

The Blues had lost six killed and a dozen wounded. Of the latter, however, it was necessary to leave only three behind in the care of the small detachment.

"We will take them up when we return," said Jack. "Mount all!"

The Blues sprang into saddle. They were in high spirits over the success of their mimic battle.

The Confederates had lost a score of dead and as many more wounded. The latter were also cared for by the Blues.

CHAPTER III.

IMPORTANT NEWS.

Once again the Blues rode on. This time Jack turned slightly to the south. This brought them nearer to the enemy's works.

A somewhat surprising fact was noted, and this was that there was an utter absence of Confederate outposts, or videttes, on this side of the defenses.

Jack wondered greatly at this, but at once assumed that it was a precaution deemed needless by Beauregard, who did not anticipate an attack from that direction.

It certainly enabled the Blues to approach very near to the Confederate works. And this revealed to them some very curious facts.

Great clouds of smoke hung over Corinth. The works seemed almost deserted, only a sentry here and there pacing his beat.

All this impressed Jack oddly, but he never dreamed of its true significance, until, suddenly, from the bushes beside the road there burst forth an aged negro, who flourished his arms, and cried:

"Glory Hallelujah! Bress de Lor'! De chillun ob Israel am come out ob de wilderness! De Yankees am come!"

Jack spurred his horse forward, and with a reassuring smile bent over in his saddle and extended his hand.

"Hello, uncle!" he said, pleasantly. "I am glad to see you. What news can you give us of the Confederates?"

The aged negro exhorter, for such he was, raised his hand and said, dramatically:

"De angel ob de Lor' hab smote de wicked wif his sword ob fire! De righteous am gone from Sodom an' Gomorrah, an' de punishment ob de sinful am at hand!"

Like a flash Jack interpreted the metaphor of the old exhorter as he pointed dramatically toward Corinth.

"Do you mean to say that Beauregard has ordered the inhabitants to leave Corinth?" he asked.

"Dat am so, captain!"

"Then—that means that he is destroying the town, previous to evacuation?"

The old negro bowed.

"God am wif de Yankees," he replied. "He am gwine to set mah people free, jest as He set Moses' people free in de days of ole Pharoah."

"Yes," said Jack. "No doubt of that, uncle. But tell me the truth. Is Beauregard evacuating Corinth?"

The negro preacher looked puzzled, and Jack hastened to say:

"Are the Confederates leaving Corinth?"

"Yes, sah, dey done is," replied the negro preacher. "Dey am gwine to leave de place, fo' de Yankees am after 'em!"

Jack turned to Hal with a thrill. It was an astounding and yet a most important revelation. He realized that he must act immediately.

This new move must be reported to General Halleck at once. It was of the utmost importance.

"Hal," he said, "Beauregard is evacuating Corinth! There is only one thing for us to do!"

"And that is, return to our lines."

"Yes; we must report at once."

"Very good," agreed the young lieutenant, and he gave the order to the Blues to right about face. The move was executed quickly, and the Blues started at a mad gallop back toward the Union lines.

They rode at full speed over the wide Corinth road, which they now reached. Jack took a straight course.

There was little to fear now from an ambushed foe. The Confederates were all on the other side of Corinth, making tracks as fast as they could for some point beyond.

The augmenting of the army of General Grant by Pope and Buell had made a tremendous force, which, no doubt, Beauregard had regarded as futile for him to meet.

On rode the Blues. They passed crossroads, cut through patches of forest, crossed bridges and forded streams which had no bridges.

The day was waning fast. The sun was just dipping in the western sky when the Blues reached the Union picket line.

Jack rode forward and gave the countersign and the Blues galloped through. In a few moments they had pulled rein once more at their old camp.

But Jack Clark rode on, and then dismounted at the entrance to General Halleck's tent. He advanced and gave his name to an orderly.

In a few moments the orderly returned, and said:

"General Halleck will see you."

Jack entered the tent of the great general. He saw other generals there, and recognized Sherman and Pope, as well as Smith and several others.

They sat in silence about the tent as he entered. General Halleck, seated at his table, looked up, and his face grew bright.

"Hullo, Clark!" he said, briskly. "You have come back safely. I am glad to see you."

"Thank you, General Halleck," replied Jack. "I have executed your orders."

"Oh, you reconnoitered the right wing of the enemy's defenses?"

"Yes, sir."

"Did you have an engagement of any sort?"

"A little encounter with a party of the Confederates in ambush. We drove them with great loss. We lost six."

"The deuce! You did well! Then you found the foe thick in that locality?"

"No," replied Jack. "To the contrary I did not, sir."

This declaration seemed to create surprise. Several of the generals started and looked up inquiringly. General Halleck grew interested.

"You did not find them thick?"

"I did not, sir."

"But—how near the enemy's works did you go?"

"Within a few hundred yards, sir. We could see a sentry here and there on the breastworks. A heavy conflagration

is going on in Corinth. We learned, sir, on good authority that Beauregard is evacuating the place, and——"

"What?"

In a voice of thunder General Halleck put in this exclamation. Jack nodded quietly, and said:

"It is true, sir."

Every general in the tent had sprung to his feet. It was, to them, a revelation they could hardly believe.

"There must be some mistake," said General Sherman. "Beauregard would be a fool to leave Corinth, where he is so heavily intrenched. It must be wrong!"

"I beg to say, gentlemen, that it is the truth," said Jack, positively. "If you do not believe it, ride around to the south of either wing, and you will soon learn that I am right."

There was a dead silence for some moments. Then a long-drawn whistle escaped General Sherman.

"This is certainly a surprise."

"It is a new development," said General Halleck. "Well, boys, it is a point in our favor. Corinth, a heavily fortified place, is thus turned over to us without a wink."

"Bravo!" exclaimed General Pope. "It would not be Beauregard if he did not do unusual things."

"It will be unusual and unfortunate for him when he leaves Corinth," said Jack. "I think that he can be overtaken."

"Very good," said General Halleck. "A pursuit shall be organized at once. Pope, you have a smart division, I name you as one. I will send Buell after you. As for you, Captain Clark, I advise you to get in the vanguard. I think we shall mark this day with a great victory!"

"I accept your orders and they shall be executed, General Halleck," said General Sherman. "My division will be under way in less than half an hour."

"But—the—the morning," said one officer, who was at Jack's shoulder. "Ought we not to wait? Darkness will soon be upon us."

General Halleck frowned, and at this Jack hastened to make reply, which allayed the fears of the officer.

"Have no fear, sir," he said, "my command is ready to start at once and guide you. We know the road absolutely. Now is the time to act, and one good, strong stroke now might end the war!"

It was plain that every general in the tent was much impressed by Jack Clark's statement. They came up, one after another, and plied him with questions.

Jack answered them with straightforward words and manner. He had plenty of material to thresh over, and he did it to the best of his ability.

The generals heard all and believed it. They unanimously resolved to move at once upon the Corinth works. Once the decision was made, they acted with great celerity.

Through the Union camp the alarm spread like wildfire. Beauregard was evacuating Corinth! The much-desired

plum was now within the grasp of Halleck and his men. He proceeded to gather it.

The Union army fell into line at once, prepared to move forward. It was then that General Halleck again sent for Jack Clark.

"Clark," he said, impressively, "we are relying solely on you. No other such report has been brought in. But, however this is, Beauregard must be driven beyond Corinth. We must take arms and pursue him, into the Mississippi, if need be."

"You can depend upon my word," replied Jack Clark. "I am sure of the facts. Beauregard is evacuating Corinth. I can say no more, sir."

"You can understand why I am so particular in this matter. One false move now might be damaging to us and deprive us of the great advantage we have gained."

"I understand, sir," said Jack, with a bow. "The interests of the service are mine. I would not speak if I was not sure."

"Very good. By the way, Clark, I have here some very good maps of the region which you have just traversed. As you are to be guide, you and your company, for our advance, I wish you would look them over. Let me know if they are correct."

Jack bowed and sat down at the camp table. He ran his eye critically over the maps.

He at once noted a misstatement. He was about to announce this to General Halleck, when a sudden startling incident caused him to refrain.

Into the tent came an orderly, who saluted, and announced:

"Lieutenant Frank Cameron!"

At the name, Jack gave a great start. He looked up in eager expectancy and deep interest.

General Halleck hesitated a moment. Then he said:

"Show Lieutenant Cameron in."

The orderly bowed and disappeared. There was a moment of suspense for Jack.

CHAPTER IV.

THE LIEUTENANT'S ROMANCE.

Then into the tent walked Lieutenant Cameron. Pale, but tall and handsome and manly he looked as he saluted the general respectfully.

The other generals had left the tent. Only General Halleck and Jack Clark were present.

Jack partly arose, as if to go. General Halleck, however, made a restraining gesture, and said:

"Lieutenant Cameron, is your business of a private nature?"

"Not so far as Captain Clark is concerned, for I feel

sure that I shall have his sympathy," replied the young lieutenant. Jack sank back in his seat and busied himself with the maps.

"Lieutenant Cameron, we have just received word that Beauregard has evacuated Corinth," said General Halleck. "You and your company must be ready for an immediate advance."

"I have just heard the report," replied the young lieutenant. "I know the importance of it all and that you are very much occupied. But a desperate exigency demands that I obtrude a personal matter upon you at this moment."

General Halleck looked displeased.

"Personal matters should be always subservient to military urgency," he said.

"But when a human life is at stake the motive is powerful."

"What do you mean?"

"General, in the prison pen there is a young Confederate citizen, who is held on suspicion as a spy——"

"A spy?"

"Yes."

"His name?"

"Jackson Wardell!"

Halleck's eye flashed, and he pulled at his beard. He looked at Cameron in plain surprise.

"What is this?" he asked. "You have not come here to intercede for his life——"

"I have, General Halleck. He is to be shot at sunrise. I beg of you a reprieve, at least. There is reasonable doubt of his guilt."

"You—ask this, Cameron?"

"I do, sir."

Genuine amazement showed in General Halleck's face. He looked at the young officer searchingly.

"This is a surprise to me. Wardell has been proved to be the most treacherous spy and dangerous foe the army has had. He was caught red-handed with all the evidence on his person. And yet, you intercede for him!"

"I must, General Halleck."

Haggard and desperate, Cameron's husky voice shook. He was trembling like an aspen. General Halleck advanced, and placed both hands on his shoulders.

"You must know that I regard this as very odd," he said. "I have perfect faith in your loyalty, Cameron."

"That faith shall never be abused."

"I believe you. But—it is hard for me to refuse you a favor. What is your interest in the prisoner?"

Cameron hesitated. His face turned white and red by turns. He was plainly embarrassed, and finally blurted out:

"I cannot tell you!"

"Then I cannot grant the reprieve."

The young officer gasped. He mopped the perspiration from his brow. He shook his head in an abstract way.

"No use," he muttered. "I cannot help him. It is of no use."

He saluted, and turned to go. But General Halleck spoke sharply:

"Lieutenant Cameron!"

The young officer wheeled as if upon a pivot. He stood before his general at attention.

"Your conduct is very strange, sir. You come to me for a reprieve for the worst spy and foe captured in this campaign, yet you will give no explanation. How do you expect me to grant it?"

Cameron struggled with himself. Then he burst forth:

"General Halleck, I have no right to ask it. He is guilty. It is all over. It cannot be helped. I have no more to say. I have no explanation to give. I am under your orders, sir."

He saluted and stood rigid as a statue. Halleck glanced at him a moment, and said, sternly:

"Go back and report to your captain. Tell him to have his men ready for this advance upon Corinth."

Cameron saluted, and, turning, went out of the tent. For some moments General Halleck was silent. Then he whistled softly and turned to Jack:

"I say, Clark, did you ever perceive any thing irrational about Cameron?"

"Never, sir!" replied Jack. "In my opinion he is a fellow of superior qualities, mental, moral, and physical."

"So I have always thought. But you have just witnessed this peculiar conduct of his?"

"Yes, sir."

"Don't you consider it peculiar?"

"Well," said Jack, hesitatingly, "knowing what I do of the circumstances, I must say that I do not."

General Halleck's face showed interest. He sat down in a camp chair.

"My curiosity is aroused, Clark. If you can give me an explanation of Cameron's conduct, I wish you would do so."

"I will try to, sir."

"I am interested."

Jack then proceeded to narrate the experiences of himself and Hal Martin while on their reconnoitering tour in the early morning. General Halleck listened with deep interest.

"Not far from here is the fine plantation home of Colonel Jim Wardell," said Jack. "Jackson Wardell, his son, while a natural sneak and villain, is yet exceedingly dear to his father. He was a schoolmate of Cameron's, and in his early college days he had not fully developed the evil traits he now manifests."

"Cameron visited at Belle View, and while there met the beautiful niece of Wardell, whose name is Myrtle Vane. He fell deeply in love with her."

"But the breaking out of the war proved a dividing line

between them. Cameron went into the service of the North. Of course the young Southern girl's sympathies are with her people. There is the gulf. They are at present held apart. But now comes Wardell with the statement that his son must be released or rescued, or Cameron need have no further hopes of holding the regard of the girl he loves."

General Halleck's face grew hard.

"And he met by appointment this Confederate officer and his men outside our lines?"

"Yes."

"It was an ill-advised thing for him to do. In fact, he might be courtmartialed for what is a palpable breach of military discipline."

Jack put a hand on the great general's sleeve.

"Ah, General Halleck," he said, in a well-modulated voice, "we must not forget that this is a cruel and unnatural war. It has broken human ties such as could be broken in no other way. We must not forget that blood is thicker than water, that love knows no bars. For the sake of the girl he loved——"

"He has been indiscreet."

"Yes."

"But—we know well the power of woman over man. We know the seductive treachery of Delilah, an example which has been repeated many times since. Suppose he had yielded and aided the prisoner to escape?"

"He did not yield."

"That does not assure us that he might not as yet. The strongest nature will sometimes bend."

"General Halleck, I trust you will be easy with Lieutenant Cameron. It is not for us to know what he is suffering. But I do know that he is loyal, and I will stake my life that he will remain so."

General Halleck was silent for a long time. Finally, he said:

"Do you think this girl really demanded this sacrifice of him?"

"No."

"If she did, she is unworthy of him."

"Exactly. I believe Wardell is using the stratagem as a lever by which he hopes to rescue his son."

General Halleck stroked his beard.

"On my word," he said, "it is quite a romance. I am very much interested, and I am going to see it through. It will do no harm to order a temporary reprieve for Wardell. But do not acquaint Cameron with the fact. After we have fought Beauregard again I will look into the matter."

Jack felt a thrill of pleasure. He arose, and said:

"That is very kind and generous of you, General Halleck."

The general's gaze softened, and a retrospective light shone in his eyes. Perhaps he was thinking of something in his own past, for even the great general of a great army

may have been, at some time, a victim of the arrows of the gentle little god of love.

However it was, the matter was dropped for the time. Jack made such corrections as he deemed necessary in the maps.

Then he took his leave. In a few moments he was once more with his company.

Already long lines of troops were moving forward in pursuit of the enemy.

Jack ordered the Blues into line at once. They were soon marching out to take the lead on the Corinth road, in pursuance to General Halleck's orders.

An hour later the Union line was within striking distance of the Confederate intrenchments. Pickets were driven in, and a sharp skirmish was soon under way.

This was conducted by the Blues and others, and it revealed that Beauregard had left a strong rear guard behind him.

The Blues led the way up to the very line of outer breastworks. Here they were held in check until reinforcements came up.

Jack, holding his men up to their work in the darkness, just in the cover of some scrub growth, heard the tramp of feet behind them.

A moment later he became aware of the fact that a body of Union troops was coming up in his rear. They were hailed, and Jack went back to see who they were.

He was astonished and pleased when a tall, young officer confronted him in the gloom.

"I am Lieutenant Cameron," he said. "My company is at your disposal, captain."

"Good!" cried Jack, with delight. "Nothing could be better. We want you to help us carry this outer breastwork. There is no artillery opposed to us yet. It is only a line of rifle pits."

"Very good, Captain Clark, I am subject to your orders."

"Will you report to your captain?"

"At present I am in command," said Cameron. "Our captain has been carried to the rear, shot through the chest."

Jack shrugged his shoulders. He saw that it meant some sacrifice of life to carry out his plans.

CHAPTER V.

IN HOT PURSUIT.

For a moment Jack Clark hesitated. He disliked, at any time, to sacrifice any of his men. He was deeply attached to them, as they were to him.

But he knew the advantage to accrue from capturing the outer line of trenches. In fact, a general order now came along the lines to advance.

So Jack decided to comply. He induced Cameron to bring his company up in support of the Blues. Then the order rang out:

"Fix bayonets! Forward!"

The little line moved forward in the gloom. Already fighting was going on on either side.

Far in the distance the flames of the burning stores in Corinth could be seen. Beauregard did not intend to leave anything behind him that would be of benefit to his foes.

Forward now moved the Blues. The line of Cameron's men was in support. From the trenches, or rifle pits, ahead there leaped a thin line of flame.

It was the last volley.

The Blues went over the breastworks with a wild hurrah. The trenches, however, were empty.

Their late occupants had fallen back to the next line of defences. The Union line wasted no time.

Again they pushed forward. Again they met with a single volley, and then they occupied the empty trenches.

But the next line of trenches held artillery. As they charged upon these the fierce fire of grapeshot and shrapnel drove them back.

Again and again the Union line faced the guns. But each time they were compelled to withdraw. The fire was too hot.

"It's no use, Clark," said Lieutenant Cameron. "We are not strong enough to carry that line of defense. We must have reinforcements. It is just the same all along the line."

Jack knew that this was true. For the moment his men were safe in the line of trenches they had captured. He did not intend to sacrifice them.

So he did not order a charge. The fierce fire of the artillery tore up the ground and made it impossible to advance and live.

So matters stood for hours. For some inexplicable reason General Halleck failed to send forward sufficient force to back the advance line that night.

It was morning before any move of magnitude was made. This was owing to the difficulty of properly manipulating and placing such a large body of men.

But with the early dawn the whole Union line, backed by line after line of regiments, moved forward irresistibly.

But now they met with no resistance. The foe had abandoned their trenches.

Such of the guns as they were compelled to leave had been spiked and rendered useless.

But the intrenchments were abandoned. Rapidly the Union line pressed forward, and soon had occupied every breastwork and were swarming into the streets of Corinth.

The foe could not be found.

They were far down the road to Tupelo. The Union regiments quickly took possession of the town.

Corinth, the great stronghold of the Confederates.

been abandoned and was in Union hands. This was a distinct shock to the people of the South.

In triumph the Stars and Stripes floated from the late Confederate fortifications. In the streets of the town the blue uniform had completely superseded the gray.

Sometime later Halleck and his staff rode into Corinth. They hastened to put the fires out, and Halleck announced the place under martial law.

The Union forces, under the command of Halleck and Grant, had pursued one victorious course from Fort Henry to the present moment. Now the generals held a consultation.

Some were in favor of remaining in Corinth and fortifying it.

Others counselled destroying the town and making a detour down the Tennessee Valley to cut off Beauregard's retreat.

"There is no doubt that it is Beauregard's purpose to fall back to Tupelo, which is on the line of railroad," said one of the generals. "It is also known that Van Dorn and Price are strong about Iuka. It would look to me like a dangerous move."

"It is just a feint on Beauregard's part to draw us into a trap between his army and that of Price," affirmed another.

"I have heard that Beauregard has become unpopular with Davis and that he is to be superseded in command," said a third.

To all of them General Halleck listened attentively. His decision was final.

"We have shattered their columns at Shiloh," he said. "They are in a state of disorganization, and we have the advantage of them in weight of numbers, or they would never have abandoned Corinth. In view of these facts we would be indeed foolish not to inaugurate a persistent and aggressive pursuit."

"I believe you!" cried General Pope. "We shall gain more by chasing the enemy than by making useless marches by counter or in detour."

The question, of course, met with some argument. But General Halleck's decision was final.

So the order went forth that morning that the army was to move forward in pursuit.

The divisions of General Pope and General Buell were ordered to accomplish this move. At once their columns got under way.

Jack Clark and his company of Blues eagerly joined the vanguard. It was by no means their desire to remain in the rear.

The Blues, as a scouting body, marched on ahead of the army. Down the Tupelo road they went, deployed cautiously in line of skirmish.

History deals with that pursuit of Beauregard to Tupelo.

It is well known that desperate rearguard fighting fol-

lowed all the way. Thus matters were, when, as the Blues were resting, after successfully flanking a masked battery, an orderly came riding up.

"Is Captain Jack Clark here?" he asked.

"Right here!" cried Jack. "What can I do for you?"

"I have orders from General Halleck."

"Let me see them."

The orderly handed him a sealed letter. Jack took it and broke the seal. Thus he read:

"Dear Clark:—I think we have the fox driven to his den at Tupelo. I shall lay plans to corner him there with the main body of the army. But in order to advance with safety it will be necessary to guard against any communication between Beauregard, at Tupelo, and Price, at Iuka. I have positive information that a detachment with dispatches has left Price's headquarters for Tupelo. They can be headed off by you, if you will at once take a road leading east toward Tuscumbia. Chase the enemy even to the very gates of Tupelo, but capture those dispatches. Do not fail!"

"Signed: HALLECK."

Jack Clark read this startling message with a thrill.

He knew that it meant sharp and dangerous work. They must march into the heart of the enemy's country. They must run the risk of capture themselves.

But Jack Clark was not the one to shrink from any enterprise of danger. He at once wrote an answer:

"To General Halleck:—Your order at this moment received, and I hasten to assure you that we start at once to execute it. I will report at the earliest possible moment thereafter.

Signed: JACK CLARK,
"Captain Fairdale Blues."

The orderly galloped away. Jack at once visited the colonel in command of that part of the line and reported to him General Halleck's orders.

Another company was moved up to take the place of the Blues. Then the brave little company of youths were quickly detached.

They set out at once down a crossroad for the Iuka and Tupelo highway. It was not long before they were beyond the Union line of advance.

On marched the Blues for hours. With tireless swing they kept on down the highway. It was through a region which had not been settled.

There were stretches of forest as yet untouched by the axe. The land was marshy and low. Artillery could hardly have proceeded over the soft roadway.

The Blues kept on, until, at dusk, they came to the highway from Iuka, and which had been designated by General Halleck.

Almost as soon as they struck the highway Jack was

positive that the detachment they had been sent to intercept had passed.

In the dust of the road was the imprint of many feet. The trail pointed southward. There was no doubt but that the foe had passed.

"We have been too late to intercept them," he said to Hal Martin, "but we must make the best of it and pursue them."

"That is right," agreed Hal, "but, to tell you the truth, I have little faith that we will catch them."

"Why?"

"Easy enough. They have got the start. No doubt they will march just as fast as we do. They will reach Tupelo before us."

"If we have horses——"

"Yes, if we had horses we could, no doubt, overtake them. But we have not."

Jack was reflective some moments. Certainly he could not afford to waste time. But there was a heap of logic in the young lieutenant's assertion.

"I believe you, Hal," he said. "It would be only by chance that we would succeed in overtaking them on foot. We must devise some other plan."

The two young officers looked at each other in doubt. It was certainly a dubious outlook.

In doubt, Jack pulled out his map and studied it. As he did so he gave a great start.

"I say, Hal," he said, "is there not a line of railroad just beyond here which runs to Tupelo?"

"I can't say," replied Hal. "What says the map?"

"It is given here," said Jack, indicating the line on the map. It was an inspiration to the two boys.

CHAPTER VI.

ON BY RAIL.

There, plainly enough, was the dotted line on the map, which indicated that a railroad entered Tupelo from that side. At the moment they could not be over half a mile from it.

"There it is," said Hal. "We might reach it by a short march, but what good will that do us?"

"True enough," agreed Jack. "Without engine or cars we could not advance very fast."

"Do you think we could find any sort of transportation after reaching the railroad? Could we not telegraph for a train?"

"It is likely that this part of the railroad is in Confederate hands," said Jack.

For some moments the two young officers were undecided. Then Hal said, reflectively:

"In our present position we are unable to count upon

overtaking the foe. By reaching the railroad there is a possibility of some sort. Even if we had to march down the track, it would not be so very much further."

"You are right," agreed Jack. "We will adopt that plan."

So orders were given and the Blues, in irregular line of march, leaped the rail fence and set out across the country.

Across the fields they went at a quick step, until finally they saw the telegraph poles, which indicated the location of the railroad.

There was the embankment and, so far as could be seen, the railroad was intact. The wires, however, were down, indicating that some party of raiders had passed that way.

It was now growing dark fast.

Jack marshalled his men on the railroad embankment. It did not take him long to decide what to do.

Orders were given to go forward down the track in the direction of Tupelo. The little company of Blues at once responded.

They were tired and hungry, having marched all that day.

But there was not a word of complaint. They kept on steadily.

Suddenly, after an hour of rapid marching, they rounded a curve, and far ahead, down the track, saw a red light—a danger signal.

"What does that mean?" asked Hal.

Jack tried to pierce the gloom. He made reply:

"I think it is a railroad station."

At once the Blues went forward again. It was not long before Jack's prediction proved true.

A small way-station stood beside the track. The town which it served was a half mile away.

There were a few houses about the station, but there was no light in any of them. The reason for this was soon made apparent.

The Blues reached the platform and quickly surrounded the station. It had but a single occupant, a grizzled old man, who was station-master and telegrapher.

He gave a gasp of terror as the Blues burst in upon him and tried to escape.

But he was held, and at once Jack began to catechise him.

"What station is this?" he asked.

"Eh?" exclaimed the terrified man. "It is Gaza. Ther town is about half a mile away."

"How is it that you are alone here?"

"I dunno. Everybody got skeered. They thought the Yanks was comin' an' dusted out."

"Do you mean to say that all these houses out here are abandoned?"

"Yes."

"Well, your people are plucky, I must say. You lingered too long."

"I reckon I did."

"See here, my man, I know you don't want to hang. It's possible for you to live many years yet. It depends on whether you tell us the truth or not."

"I'll tell ye anything ye want."

"Good! Now let us know if there are trains running on this road? In other words, is the road open?"

"I dunno," replied the station-master, jerking his thumb toward the telegraphic switchboard, "the wires are down."

"Yes, I see. How long since a train passed here?"

"About two hours."

"Do you mean to say a train passed here two hours ago?"

"Yes, sir."

This was a revelation to the boys.

"Which way was it going?"

"South."

"Oh! Was it passenger or freight?"

"It was freight, but it carried passengers. There were twenty cars with Confederate troops aboard."

"Oh!" said Jack, exchanging glances with Hal. "They were probably on their way to Tupelo?"

"I suppose so."

"You know, don't you, that Beauregard has retreated from Corinth?"

The expression of the man's face showed that this was a bit of news to him.

"Do ye mean it?" he asked.

"It is true."

He whistled in a surprised way.

"Wal, you wait. He's only playing a game to draw the Yankees on. He'll whip 'em out yet!"

"That is your opinion?"

"Yas, it is!"

"Well, I'm afraid you'll find it a very erroneous one," said Jack, "for the Yankees are going to drive Beauregard out of the country."

The fellow shrugged his shoulders. He looked at the Blues curiously, and now asked a question in his turn:

"What are you doing down here? Don't ye know the town over here is full of Confederates? They'll eat ye up!"

The boys were for a moment disposed to regard this statement as a bluff. But the man's manner convinced Jack that it might be true.

"So there are Confederates over here in the town?" he asked.

"Yes."

"What is their strength?"

A cunning light gleamed in the fellow's eyes. He leered in reply:

"A thousand or more!"

"That is a lie," said Jack, promptly. "I don't believe there are one hundred."

"Wal, go over and find out fer yerself," growled the station-master. "Have ye got any more questions to ask me?"

"Yes," replied Jack, "and if you lie to me again I'll hang you to the first telegraph pole. Now don't for a moment forget that."

"All right," was the sullen reply. "What do ye want to know?"

"We want to get transportation down this line toward Tupelo a few miles. How can we do it?"

For a moment the station-master did not reply. Then, after reflection, he said:

"Between here and Frazer's Bluff there is a long grade, two miles or more. Thar ain't no engine about here, but thar's half a dozen flats out here on the siding. I reckon ye could git aboard and let 'em slide and they'd take ye down all right."

In an instant Jack and Hal grasped the idea. They exchanged comprehensive glances.

Two miles or more might enable them to cut off the detachment they were pursuing.

"My friend," said Jack, coolly, "you have done us a great favor and, at the same time, saved your life. I did think of hanging you, but I shall let you live. To make sure, though, that you won't give the alarm to those thousand soldiers over in Gaza I shall tie you up here for a while. Rest assured I deprecate the inconvenience it will cause you, but I know you will see the necessity."

"Do yer worst," snapped the station-master. "I couldn't expect anything different from you Yankees."

"You surely could not," agreed Jack. "You are sure to get what you deserve. Tie him up, boys!"

The order was obeyed.

In the station were plenty of lanterns. A number of these were taken, and the Blues went out upon the railroad siding. They found that Pratt, which was the station-master's name, had told the truth.

Half a dozen flat-cars were coupled to each other on the siding.

It did not take long to open the switch and run these out upon the main line.

As Pratt had declared, the grade toward Tupelo was downward. It looked like an easy matter to let the cars slide along by their own gravity.

The brakes were set and the cars held in check while the Blues clambered aboard. The lanterns were set on the forward car as a sort of a headlight.

When the Blues were once aboard safely Jack and Hal mounted the forward platform, and Jack gave the order to release the brakes.

This was done, and at once the cars started forward. Every moment they gained momentum down the grade.

It was an exciting situation and quite unlike anything the Blues had ever experienced.

Down the grade they went. At times the grade rose a little, but the momentum was enough to carry them over.

And so they went on, faster and faster. A faint pressure

was kept on the brakes to steady the cars, but they were allowed to go at a great rate of speed.

Around curves, over bridges and across roads the train of flat-cars fled in the darkness. The Blues were being carried rapidly further into the enemy's country. They were certainly chasing the enemy in a novel fashion.

On and still on dashed the train of flat-cars. Down deeper into the darkness. They were now beginning to slacken speed, and Jack knew they must be approaching Frazer's Bluff.

Now the grade ceased its downward course. The cars began to slacken speed as they mounted the up-grade.

Just ahead were lights, doubtless those of the station. The train was losing headway and must soon stop.

So Jack gave the order to set the brakes. The Blues sprang down from the cars.

There was no use in trying to sidetrack the cars. They could only leave them where they were.

Quickly the Blues formed, and with Jack at their head, ran up the track toward the station. As they came into the light from the station lamps Jack was given a start of surprise.

CHAPTER VII.

A TELEGRAPH MESSAGE.

In the glare of the platform lamps Jack Clark saw gray uniforms. A moment more and the Blues were upon the platform.

A yell of surprise and alarm went up in the darkness and there was a scattering of the Confederates. Jack had no idea how many there were, but he gave the order to charge.

Forward rushed the Blues. They reached the end of the platform, but the Confederates had vanished into the darkness.

Jack would have ordered further pursuit, but caution withheld him. He knew that it might plunge them into a trap of death.

And this was something which he desired to avert. So he gave orders to the Blues to halt.

From the gloom now came shots. Bullets whistled about the railroad station.

The Blues answered, and soon a lively fight in the darkness was in progress. Two of the Blues were shot dead, so that Jack ordered the boys to fall back to the cover of the station.

Here they took up their stand; and a sharp battle ensued. Jack soon reached the conclusion that the Confederates were not in great force.

He was just about to order a charge, when the clicking of a telegraph instrument in the station reached his ear.

In an instant he sprang into the operator's room. It

was empty, but he knew from the call that was sounding that some one at the other end was trying to call up the Frazer's Bluff operator.

Jack knew that this call could come only from the direction of Tupelo, for the wires were down in the other direction.

For a moment he hesitated. Then he remembered that Coulter, one of the Blues, was a telegrapher.

He called him, and Coulter at once responded.

"Answer that call, Coulter," he said. "Let us know what it is."

The young telegrapher proceeded to do so.

Clickety-click! Clickety-click! The instrument quickly ticked out the following, which Coulter repeated aloud:

"Is that you, Hardy?"

"Answer him in the affirmative," said Jack. Coulter did so.

"Where have you been? I have been calling you for over three minutes!"

"I'm all ready now. What do you want?" dictated Jack.

"General Beauregard sends orders to Colonel Dana to proceed to Belle View. Colonel Wardell, who lives there, has valuable information for him. He will meet there a detachment from Price, at Iuka. Tell him to get dispatches and send posthaste to me by wire from the Bluff. This is General Beauregard's order."

For a moment Jack Clark was thrilled with this revelation. It seemed as if luck was coming his way.

He looked at Hal Martin, who stood near, and said:

"Do you hear that, Hal?"

"We are in luck!"

"Well, I should say! What reply shall I make?"

Hal was silent a moment.

"Well," he said, slowly, "it seems to me that it will pay us to visit Belle View and surprise Wardell. We can then intercept Price's dispatches."

"Right!" agreed Jack. "Nothing could be better. It shall be done."

So he bent over and dictated to Coulter:

"Answer as follows: Your orders shall be obeyed. Will proceed to Belle View and secure dispatches. You will hear from me later."

Coulter sent the message. Then the usual terms of parting were exchanged, and Coulter arose.

Jack picked up a hatchet.

With a few quick blows he demolished the instrument. He then turned and sprang out upon the platform.

"Forward, Blues!" he shouted. "Charge!"

With a cheer the Blues sprang forward. In the gloom it was not easy to locate the foe.

But Jack knew that there was no other way to terminate the fight. Into the darkness leaped the Blues. Their gleaming line of bayonets was evidently too much for the Confederates.

For they broke and fled. The Blues scattered them like chaff. For a long ways they pursued them.

But now, that the foe was dispersed, Jack was anxious to reach Belle View as soon as possible.

He realized the necessity of getting there in time to intercept the dispatches and to capture the detachment.

So the Blues quickly fell back again to the station. The town of Frazer's was but a handful of dwellings, and these had been mostly deserted by their owners.

So no opposition was offered the Blues as they rapidly marched through the place and into the highway which led to Belle View, the magnificent plantation home of Colonel Jim Wardell.

The Blues rapidly pressed on to cover the intervening two miles as quickly as possible.

Soon they had left the town far behind. Up hill and down they kept on rapidly.

The distant barking of a dog soon told them that they were approaching a habitation. That it was Belle View Jack felt sure.

As the young captain pressed on he could not help but think of Lieutenant Cameron and his romance. It gave him a little thrill to think that he might soon have the pleasure of seeing the young woman upon whom Cameron had centered his life.

Lights now were seen in the distance. Then they came to long lines of hedges. Beyond these were productive fields.

There was not, in any part of the South, a more productive plantation than Belle View. Colonel Wardell was a power among his class.

The Blues marched on until they reached the entrance to the grounds about the plantation house. By this time negroes appeared with lanterns, to learn who had come.

When it was discovered that the visitors were Union soldiers there was great consternation.

But Jack had surrounded the house with his boys, and it was impossible for anyone to escape.

As Jack and Hal mounted the steps of the porch, Wardell himself, flushed and excited, appeared.

"What is this?" he roared. "Who has invaded my grounds? What rabble is this? Who are you?"

"We are part of General Halleck's advance guard," said Jack. "Your safety depends entirely upon your civil conduct, sir."

"Bless my stars! You dare insult me on my own grounds? What has the country come to, when you Yankees come down here and despoil our homes?"

"Your home will not be despoiled, nor a thing injured, if you maintain a decent attitude," said Jack, firmly. "All depends on that, sir."

"But—what are you doing here? What do you want?"

"A certain detachment from General Price, bearing dispatches to General Beauregard, is due here."

Wardell gave a perceptible start.

"How did you learn that?" he asked.

"By means of the telegraph wire at Frazer's Bluff," replied Jack, coolly.

Wardell gasped, and reeled against the door-jamb.

"Have you been there?"

"We have just come from there."

"Confound you Yankees! You are overrunning the country. I demand that you get off my land."

"I am sorry, Colonel Wardell," said Jack, politely, "but we must stay here for a while, irksome as it is to you."

Wardell continued to fume and rave. Presently he went into the house. When he came out, it was with boots and a riding whip.

A little darkey was bringing a high-mettled horse from the stable. As the planter was about to mount, Jack put a hand on his arm.

"Where are you going?"

Like a flash the planter turned.

"What business is that of yours?"

"You cannot leave at present."

"What?" gasped the choleric planter. "I am not permitted to leave my own grounds? This is an outrage!"

"Nevertheless you cannot go," said Jack, sternly.

"What do you mean? I am a non-combatant."

"That remains to be seen," said Jack, quietly. "I saw you but a short time since in a colonel's uniform."

Wardell was crimson. He stared at the boy captain.

"Will you tell me where?" he asked.

"Yes. In a certain grove of trees on an eminence outside the Union lines at Corinth. You met there a young officer named Cameron, whom you tried to induce to intercede for your son, who is under sentence of death as a spy."

Wardell seemed to almost collapse. He drew a quick, sharp, gasping breath.

"You—who the deuce are you?"

"I am Captain Jack Clark, of the Fairdale Blues."

"And you saw all this?"

"Yes."

"It was a bluff. I wore the uniform to impress Cameron. I am a noncombatant."

"You are a deadly foe of the Union," said Jack, pointedly. "At the present moment you are a prisoner in our lines. I do not intend to let you go."

Wardell trembled like an aspen.

"A prisoner!" he gasped. "This is terrible! It is an outrage! You seize my son, who is innocent, and hang him, and now you will hang me!"

"If we hang you it will be because you richly deserve it. If you are no better than your son, you do deserve it."

"Dare you insult me?"

"That would be impossible, sir."

Wardell glared at the boy captain in impotent wrath.

He was plainly a man of bluff and bluster, but not given to bravery.

"You know Lieutenant Cameron?" he asked.

"I do!"

"He is a false friend. He has been entertained at my house, and my niece would wed him if he would intercede for my son."

"He has done so."

"What?" gasped the planter. "Is my son at liberty?"

"No," replied Jack, "but I was present when Frank Cameron interceded for Jackson Wardell's life. He did not secure his release, but your son has been granted a reprieve."

Wardell uttered an exclamation, which had a ring of evil triumph. But he hastened to say:

"That part of the contract concerning my niece will not hold good unless my son is set free."

"I doubt that," said Jack, coldly. "I don't believe, from what I have heard of her, that your niece is that sort of a girl. I don't believe that she would require Frank Cameron to stoop to an act of treachery to save your son."

"You are right in your belief, sir," said a musical voice from behind Wardell. "She would not require such a thing from Lieutenant Cameron, and if her name was used in that connection, it was without her consent."

Beside the planter now stood a young girl dressed in a gown of spotless white. Her face was almost spiritual in its beauty as she stood in the light of the porch lamp.

Jack Clark caught his breath. He could at once understand why Lieutenant Cameron stood ready to sell life and almost honor for this young woman, whose peer could scarcely be found.

CHAPTER VIII.

AT BELLE VIEW.

Wardell turned like a flash, and glared at the beautiful apparition who stood facing him coldly. Fury and hate shone in his face.

"You!" he gritted. "Confound you, what are you doing here?"

"I became interested when I heard the name of Lieutenant Cameron," she replied. "I cannot hear him traduced, for I know that he is noble and honorable, though his cause is not ours!"

"You are a silly fool!" hissed Wardell. "Get back to your boudoir! Back to the house! This is no place for women!"

"I refuse to go until I have the promise that you will tell Lieutenant Cameron the truth. While I am sorry that your son is in danger, I cannot and will not call upon Lieutenant Cameron to sacrifice or even risk his honor to save him!"

She spoke with full, firm tones and her manner was queenly. Jack doffed his cap, and replied:

"I will do you the pleasure to state that Lieutenant Cameron refused to believe that you demanded of him that he should admit disguised Confederates to the prison pen and secure the escape of young Wardell. I know that he holds you still in high esteem. The Union army is coming this way, and you may soon see him——"

"Stop!" roared Wardell. "You shall not talk to my niece in such a way! I will shoot the young scoundrel on sight if he dares show his head here. Myrtle, go into the house!"

"I refuse to obey," she said, coldly. The planter was furious. With uncontrollable anger he seized her by the arm and wrung a cry of pain from her lips.

In an instant Jack sprung forward and caught the brute by the collar, hurling him to the ground. Wardell sprang up and rushed at the boy captain furiously.

But a half dozen of the Blues seized and held him.

Jack had sprung forward and assisted Myrtle to rise, for she had sunk to her knees, half fainting with pain. He assisted her to the door, where she turned, and said:

"I thank you, Captain Clark. My uncle is very bitter toward me, owing to my friendship with Lieutenant Cameron. I hope he will be more reasonable some day."

"I think he will, Miss Vane," said Jack, with a low bow. "There will be a great change before long. I think that the war will soon end, and then we may all live in peace once more."

"I pray that it may be so, Captain Clark," she said, earnestly. "It is an unhappy time for the whole country."

She vanished in the house. Jack turned to where Wardell, now somewhat recovered from his fury, stood in the hands of his guards.

"Colonel Wardell," said Jack, sternly, "you have forgotten your standing as a gentleman and a man of honor. Shall I be compelled to keep you under guard, or will you give me your word to conduct yourself properly henceforth?"

"My time will come," gritted the planter. "You Yankees shall pay for invading our country."

Jack motioned to the guards to release Wardell, who quickly ascended the porch and passed into the house.

Just at that moment Hal Martin came up, and said:

"I think you have made a mistake, Jack."

"Why?"

"I believe that man should be held as a prisoner of war. There is no doubt that he holds a commission as colonel in the Confederate army."

Jack shrugged his shoulders.

"The house is surrounded," he said. "He cannot escape. We will keep an eye on him."

"I think it is well."

"Well, I don't believe our detachment, for which we are

looking, is going to get here. We have seen no signs of them as yet."

"Hark! What is that?"

Down the lane, which led to the house, the sound of voices was heard.

The Blues had been deployed to surround the house and the grounds. But this lane, by which it was assumed that the detachment would arrive, was left unguarded.

So the Confederate detachment marched unhesitatingly into the lane, never once suspecting that they were going into a trap.

Not until they had reached the plantation yard did they discover the danger.

Then a stern voice rang out:

"Surrender! You are surrounded and will be shot to a man if you resist!"

Captain Clark stepped out in full view as he uttered these words. The effect was thrilling.

The Confederate officer's voice rang out:

"Halt!"

The little company came to a halt. Their arms gleamed in the light of the porch lamps. They numbered a score or more.

And what Jack noted quickly was the fact that at least ten of them were mounted and wore officers' uniforms. This was an unexpected thing, and puzzled the young captain greatly.

The officer, who seemed to be in command of the detachment, now stepped forward, and cried:

"Who are you?"

"I am Captain Jack Clark, of the Fairdale Blues. You are surrounded by my men, and I demand your surrender."

"Is not this the plantation of Belle View?"

"It is!"

"Then we refuse to surrender. Forward, boys! Fix bayonets!"

Jack leaped back to cover, and the Blues burst from their concealment. The Confederate soldiers opened fire.

And now an astounding thing happened.

The mounted officers, nearly a dozen of them, suddenly wheeled their horses and dashed back down the lane.

They swept through the line of the Blues like a whirlwind and went madly galloping away into the night.

Shots were sent after them, but without effect. The Blues now closed in on the little detachment and overwhelmed them. They surrendered at discretion.

Jack at once proceeded to interview their captain:

"You have come from Iuka?"

"Yes," was the reply, "we belong to General Price's division."

"You bear dispatches for Beauregard. I will trouble you for them."

"I have them not."

"What? Where are they?"

"Gone," replied the captain, with a sweep of his hand. "The officers who just rode away from here carried them."

Jack was disconcerted. For a moment he hardly knew what to do. But again he asked:

"Why did you have so many officers with you?"

"They have been lately commissioned by President Davis and are on their way to report to General Beauregard."

"Oh! And they carried the dispatches?"

"Yes."

Jack turned to Hal Martin. It was a moment of dismay and consternation.

"We are beaten!" said the young captain of the Blues. "What can we do?"

Hal answered, in desperation:

"Keep up the chase!"

"What, pursue them?"

"Yes."

"But we can never hope to overtake them. They are mounted."

"Yet we might as well try."

Jack hesitated. But just at that moment a negro slave, who stood nearby and had heard their remarks, came forward.

He bowed, and said in a low tone and eager manner:

"Massa Yankee, I kin jes' tell yo' dat dem ossifers neber git very far to-night, for dey ain' one ob dem knows dis kentry at all. De scout who was guidin' dem is dead ober yender. Yo' bet dey is jest as apt to go one way as to go anoder."

Jack and Hal saw the point. They gave a great start.

"Who are you?" asked Jack. "How do you know so much?"

"Ise jes' a po' slave, sah, but dey brung me along fo' a cook," he replied. "I jes' knows wha' Ise talkin' about. I heah a heap ob fings. Sam he jes' listen an' say nuffin'. But he do a heap ob finking, all de same."

"Sam," cried Jack, "here is money for you. You have done us a great favor. Can you tell us one more thing?"

The darkey's eyes rolled.

"I done tell yo' all I kin, sah."

"Very good! Who carried the dispatches intended for General Beauregard?"

The negro sniffed, and then cut a double shuffle.

"I kin tell yo' dat," he said. "It was one ob dem ossifers what got away, sah."

"Enough!" cried Jack. "Suppose we leave a guard here with the prisoners, Hal. They can return to our lines at their leisure. We will go on in chase of the enemy."

"And give them a hot pursuit?"

"Yes."

"I wish we had horses."

"So do I, but we must make the best of it on foot. the order to fall in."

CHAPTER IX.

AN IMPORTANT CAPTURE.

Hal was not long in singling out men for the detachment to escort the prisoners to the Union lines. They were placed in charge of Sergeant Joe Ward.

"You will rejoin us later, when we get back from this expedition," said Hal. "Don't get into trouble."

"You bet we won't," cried the plucky sergeant. "We'll pull through."

The Blues now fell in and marched away into the night. It was indeed difficult to get on trail of the escaping officers.

Being mounted, they had undoubtedly put a goodly distance between them and Wardell's plantation.

But whether they had ridden toward Beauregard's camp or the Union lines was a question. However, the Blues were bound to find out.

Rapidly they marched away at random. They had little to guide them, save occasionally a clew gained from some negro whom they chanced to run across.

Several times they heard of the little party of Confederate officers just ahead of them. Then all clews ceased.

The night was passing rapidly. It was already nearing the dawn.

Jack, mounted on a high-mettled horse, rode ahead of the company. The Blues were well fagged with the hard marching of the past twenty-four hours.

But not a complaint was made. Bravely they kept on.

When daylight came it found them descending into a little hollow, or depression, which was surrounded by wooded crests.

Here, just at a bend of the road, was a house of typical Southern style, with the wide porch and Doric columns.

Jack drew rein instantly, and exclaimed:

"Halt!"

The Blues came to a halt. The boy captain sat a moment regarding the distant house keenly.

The Blues, as it chanced, were at the bend of the road and in the shadow of the trees, where they could not very well be seen from the house. Suddenly an exclamation escaped the lips of many of the little company.

A startling scene was revealed.

Just crossing the road and approaching the house was a troop of men in gray uniforms.

Ten could be counted, and each one wore shoulder straps. It was easy enough to identify them as the object of the pursuit.

"There you are!" said Hal, coming up to Jack. "We have got them."

"Not yet," said Jack, cautiously. "If they should see us they would simply ride away from us."

"They are going to stop at the house,"

"So it seems."

"Probably they, as well as their horses, are jaded. No doubt the man of the house is a loyal Southerner and will give them lodging."

"No doubt."

The officers dismounted, and a man of the planter type came out of the house.

He held converse with them for a few moments. Then

the horses were taken in charge by negroes and the officers entered the house.

Jack and his men watched all with interest.

The young captain felt a thrill of triumph. He believed that the quarry was in his grasp.

It should not escape if he could possibly help it. But he knew that he must be wary.

He waited until he was satisfied that the officers were all within and probably engaged in the discussion of a hearty meal.

Then he deployed the Blues in a careful manner, so that with a sudden dash the house could be quickly surrounded.

Not until all was ready did Jack give the order to advance.

Then he rose in his stirrups, and cried:

"Forward, Blues!"

The boys responded with a rousing cheer that must have aroused those in the house. Down swept the little column. They went right and left to surround the house. The gray uniforms of the officers appeared in the doorway.

Jack Clark put spurs to his horse and leaped him over the paling fence in front of the door. The Blues were right behind him.

The surprise was complete. The startled Confederate officers rushed out of the house, but were compelled to throw up their arms, and cry:

"We surrender!"

It was a lucky strike for the Blues.

That the capture was an important one was certain. In a few moments the ten officers were disarmed and standing in line.

Jack Clark felt a thrill of triumph. He knew that General Halleck would be well pleased.

"Well, you are a Yankee," said one of the officers, who were a colored man's sons, and gave the name of Delaney.

"Yes," replied Jack, with a smile. "All is fish that comes to ground."

"What will you do with us?"

"You are prisoners of war, and shall be held for exchange."

"We hear that you treat our boys well in limbo."

"I hope so," replied Jack. "There is no reason why we should not. War is a cruel and necessary evil, but it should not obliterate humanity."

Colonel Delaney looked at Jack in a deep way, and said:

"Is that the way all you Yankees feel about it?"

"I hope so," replied Jack. "It is true, so far as I know."

"You are better than you are painted to us, then," said the Confederate colonel. "Hang it, I don't think there ought to have been a war."

"Now you are talking straight," said Jack. "We are all brothers, of one nation and one flag. That is all I am fighting for."

"If our people had it put to them in that light I don't believe they would fight."

"They will see it in that light sometime, but only after thousands of lives have been sacrificed and millions of dollars squandered. Now that it is started, the war must go on. But, mark my word, one day you will see us all united again, and for all time."

"I don't believe it, captain," said another of the officers. "The South is going to have her rights."

"What are her rights?" asked Jack.

"Well," said the officer, hesitatingly, "we want our rights. Free speech and free thought. We want the right to seize our property when it strays North. We want recognition as an independent section of the country, free to make our own laws, and owing allegiance to no power."

"That is precisely what you are to-day," said Jack. "Freedom of speech and thought is not forbidden anywhere in the Union. The other matters of property rights may be better settled than at the end of a bloody and protracted war."

There was a murmur among the other prisoners, but none essayed to carry the argument further. But Colonel Delancey shook Jack's hand warmly, and said:

"If all the Yankees were like you there wouldn't be a fireside in the South but would hold out a welcome to them."

"I will admit that many of the Northerners misunderstand the question and are prone to give it an unjust and partisan view," said Jack, "but I want you to believe they are in the minority."

"It makes me feel better to know it," said the colonel.

The Blues now made bivouac about the house. The owner, a bluff Southerner, did not seem disposed to treat the Blues unkindly.

"It is not often I have so many visitors in one day," he said, "so you will excuse my lack of preparation. If you will take largely the spirit for the deed I will do the best I can for you."

"You need make no excuse, my friend," said Jack, warmly. "My boys are tired and hungry, and must have a few hours of rest. If you can find us some pork, or meal for hoecakes or some fat chickens I will pay you well for them."

"I can't say that I can furnish you enough to feed a hundred men," said the planter, "but all I have is yours."

It turned out, however, that the planter was able to sell

Jack a beef creature, with which a hasty barbecue was made. Then he rolled out a barrel of Seuppernong wine, to which the boys did justice, it being a harmless and non-intoxicating beverage.

After eating their fill the Blues lay down in their blankets and slept. Four hours Jack allowed them for recuperation.

It was, by this time, afternoon. The order to fall in was given, and the Blues, folding up their blankets, hastened to obey.

They now started on the return march to the Union lines.

In all reason Jack knew this could not be so very far, for the Union army must have been moving toward them all the while.

In fact, before many miles had been covered, a Union vidette appeared in the road ahead.

Jack signalled him, and he rode down to meet the Blues. As it happened, he knew many of the boys.

He at once gave Jack some very much needed information. This was to the effect that Pope's division was not more than a mile away.

Also Jack learned that, from reports brought in by scouts, Beauregard was already at Tupelo and intrenching himself strongly.

The Union divisions had no orders to turn back as yet, and doubtless would go on to invest Beauregard in his new quarters.

The vidette was astonished at sight of the important prisoners in the hands of the Blues.

"That is a haul," he exclaimed. "Ten of their captains and colonels! You ought to get honorable mention for that!"

The vidette now galloped away.

Jack and his little company had just reached the summit of a little eminence, when they were given a great surprise.

Far down below, in a little cut, they saw a file of men. One glance was enough.

"Great Cæsar!" cried Hal Martin. "It's Joe Ward and the prisoners we got at Belle View! Here is luck, to be sure."

CHAPTER X.

AN EVIL REPORT.

At almost the same moment the little detachment of Blues below caught sight of their comrades.

A cheer went up, and it was answered with interest.

The Blues were halted, and waited for Sergeant Ward and his detachment to come up. The greeting they received was a warm one.

The prisoners fell into file with the others, and the march

was resumed. Sergeant Ward now came forward and reported to Jack.

"After you left us at Belle View," he said, "we marched out upon the highway for a few miles, when we were overtaken by a young woman on horseback. She gave me this to deliver."

Jack took a letter and read the superscription with not a little of interest and surprise. Thus it read:

"To Lieutenant Cameron.

"Kindness of Captain Clark."

Jack smiled, and placed the letter in his military blouse.

"It shall be delivered," he said.

The Blues now marched on rapidly and soon encountered the Union advance guard.

There was no trouble in passing this, and they soon came in sight of the main body of the army.

Lanes and roads and fields were choked with masses of blue-clad men, all pushing forward.

The army they were pursuing was as yet beyond their reach, but they kept on, just the same.

The Blues now halted and waited for the divisions to pass. Jack was desirous of reporting to General Pope and giving up his prisoners.

Then he intended to push on again in advance with the Blues.

It was some time before the general and his staff came riding along. At once Jack galloped up and saluted.

General Pope at once halted his staff.

"Hello, Clark," he cried, cheerily. "Well, I am glad to see you. What is the news from the front?"

"All quiet," replied Jack. "Beauregard is intrenching at Tupelo, and quite beyond our reach."

The general's face fell, and he grew grave and stern.

"That is too bad," he said. "We will hardly be able to attack him successfully with our present force. I must send a dispatch to Halleck."

He turned to an orderly and delivered the message. Then he turned to Jack again.

"By the way, how about that expedition given you by Halleck? Did you have any luck?"

"Yes," replied Jack, "I have fulfilled his orders."

"What! You captured the detachment?"

"Yes, sir. They are over yonder under guard."

General Pope rubbed his eyes.

"The deuce," he exclaimed. "I bet Halleck a new uniform that you wouldn't get them."

"Well, there they are, sir, to a man."

"Did you get Price's dispatches?"

"Yes, sir."

General Pope whistled softly.

"By Jupiter, you are a good one, Captain Clark! You deserve promotion. There's the making of a general in you!"

"I do not seek it," said Jack, shaking his head. "I am fighting for my country, and not for glory or advancement. I shall stay by my company to the end."

"I wish that was the prevailing spirit," said General Pope. "Not a department in this army is free from the curse of personal jealousy and rank favoritism."

He spurred his horse forward and inspected the prisoners. The moment his gaze lit upon Colonel Delancey he gave a sharp cry:

"Hello, Delancey! You here?"

The Confederate colonel saluted.

"I am a victim, general," he said. "That is a plucky little captain over there. He got us all."

"I have found out his good qualities long ago," said General Pope. "But, really, Delancey, when you and I were in West Point together, we never dreamed of such a thing as this."

"Indeed, no, general. If war had been predicted then we would have regarded the prophecy as absurd."

"So we would. I have no doubt you will soon be exchanged. I wish you better luck, Delancey."

"Thank you, general."

General Pope rode on. The prisoners were given to a strong provost guard and sent to the rear. By the general's request, Jack rode beside him for some distance.

"I say, Clark," said General Pope, suddenly, "if I remember right, you are a friend of Lieutenant Cameron's?"

"I am," replied Jack.

"Well, I am sorry to yield you this bit of news. Cameron is disgraced and under arrest."

Jack gave a violent start and nearly fell from his horse.

"What?" he gasped. "Frank Cameron disgraced and arrested?"

"That is the truth!"

"General Pope, this is a great shock to me. I know that Cameron is incapable of any wrong act."

"Nevertheless, the evidence against him is quite conclusive."

"What is the charge?"

"Last night the spy and condemned traitor, Jackson Wardell, escaped from the prison pen."

Jack gasped and leaned forward on his saddle pommel. He thought of the awful struggle in which Cameron had indulged. He thought of the message which the girl he loved had sent him.

He could see it all. The lovelorn lieutenant had weakened and yielded to what he believed was the desire of his sweetheart.

Horror and sympathy filled Jack's breast. He knew what the act of treachery meant for the young officer. He knew that it was a crime punishable by death.

He thought of the beautiful Southern girl, waiting hopefully for her lover to receive and answer her message. He

could see her droop and wither like a stricken flower with the dread news of Cameron's fate.

And it was all the cowardly, villainous work of the Wardells, father and son. Jack shivered with horror.

"It is not right!" he said. "My soul, it is not right!"

"I think myself it is too bad," said General Pope. "I have been told of the provocation that Cameron had by General Halleck. But that does not excuse him. He must pay the penalty."

"What is that?"

"There is but one."

"Death?"

"Yes."

"Has Cameron admitted the deed?"

"That is the strangest thing about it. He strenuously denies it. The evidence against him, it is true, is purely circumstantial. He will have a trial by drumhead."

Jack's eyes flashed.

"What is the evidence?" he asked.

"As near as I can remember there is no person can swear that Cameron released the prisoner. One of the guards was discovered with a sword through his neck. The prisoner, with several others, was gone. The only spark of evidence against Cameron is the fact that he was desired by his sweetheart to free the prisoner, and also that he was seen near the spot a short while before."

Jack snapped his fingers.

"He is not guilty," he said.

General Pope bent a questioning glance upon the young captain. He seemed a bit surprised.

"You don't think so?"

"I don't think at all, I know it."

"Will you explain why you do not think him guilty?"

"Yes," replied Jack. "The fact that he was seen near the spot is of no value. From what I know of the man, if he was guilty he would admit it. Another thing, he would only have done it for the sake of his sweetheart, and he did not believe it was her request, and, as I happen to know, it was not."

"No, you may be sure that some Confederate friend of the prisoner is the one who dealt the guard the fatal sword-thrust and got Wardell out of the prison pen. I happen to know that Colonel Wardell has had a secret gang working to free his son for a long time."

General Pope was silent. He stroked his beard for a moment. Then he said:

"In any event, poor Cameron is doomed. Halleck holds him guilty and will shoot him."

"It must not be!" cried Jack, earnestly. "I will see General Halleck at once and tell him the truth. I know he is far too fair-minded to see a noble young officer like Cameron go to his death."

"It would certainly be too bad," admitted General Pope, "but if he is guilty he should suffer."

"I do not think so," said Jack. "We must remember that the provocation was powerful. The escape of one prisoner cannot affect the campaign in a perceptible manner."

"Principle, my boy. It is the maintaining of a principle and of discipline. If he were not made an example of, other boys might do even worse."

"There is such a thing as too much principle," said Jack.

But the subject was dropped, and Jack now rode away to join his Blues. They were in high spirits.

Their enterprise had been a success. They had accomplished much and with great credit.

They were now ready to again go on in advance of the Union columns. The prisoners had been disposed of.

Jack knew that if the pursuit was carried as far as Tupelo there would be some desperate fighting.

He feared greatly for the safety of Pope's division. They would be far in advance of the main army.

Beauregard's scouts would be sure to inform him. He was not the one to allow such an opportunity to go unheeded, and he would certainly throw the weight of his army in to cut Pope and his army off.

But Jack Clark knew that he was not the head of the army. The responsibility rested on him alone. All that could be done was to obey orders and say nothing.

The Blues were ready and willing to do this at all times. They now hastened away to join the vanguard.

This was far ahead now. It took some marching to keep up with it, and the Blues only caught up just as the advance line reached the little eminence above Belle View.

Once more they looked down upon the Wardell plantation.

CHAPTER XI.

THE BATTLE AT BELLE VIEW.

Instinctively Jack bent his glass upon the surrounding grounds of Belle View, to see if he could see anything of Wardell or of pretty Myrtle Vane.

But he saw nothing. He wondered if the escaped prisoner had got back to his home.

Slowly the advance guard descended upon Belle View. Soon the Blues were once more marching into the yard.

But it was to meet with a surprise. No one was there save a few negroes left in charge.

Wardell and his pretty niece had gone. It was enough to assume that the planter had not dared to meet the Union army, and thought it best to get out of the way.

Jack smiled with ill-concealed amusement at this. It was plain to him that Wardell feared capture, for there was no doubt he held a commission in the Confederate army.

Jack now felt sorry that he had not held him as a prisoner of war. But it could not be helped now.

The plantation was now made a general headquarters by General Pope for that division of the advancing army.

It had developed that a large force of Confederate infantry and cavalry had suddenly appeared in their front, and with the apparent purpose of hindering their advance.

But, while it for a moment checked the general advance, General Pope threw out wings, right and left, intending, if possible, to envelop the foe.

Artillery came galloping up, and was posted on a hill beyond the plantation buildings. Fire was opened, the shells sweeping the woods beyond.

It happened that the Blues were at the moment stationed in the rear of the battery.

Suddenly, from the woods in front, a charging line of gray was seen. It came on at a full run.

The commander of the battery trained his guns and sent shells into the solid ranks of the foe.

But, though it tore holes in the gray ranks, the fire of the battery did not check the foe. They came on at the double-quick.

The commander of the battery saw that he was not going to be able to stop the advance.

In a few moments the gray line would sweep over the hill, and the battery would be captured. It was a thrilling moment for him.

But, looking back, he saw the Blues. At once he came rushing down, and cried:

"Captain Clark, we are hard pressed. Can't you swing your company around the hill and attack in flank?"

"Yes!" cried Jack. "Attention, Blues! Right wheel! Forward! Double-quick!"

Away scampered the Blues around the north side of the eminence. It was true that they were but a handful.

The Confederate advance, no doubt, had several regiments in line. But a flank attack, even from a skirmish line, is always demoralizing.

So when the Blues wheeled and began a hot fire upon the flank of the advancing regiments the result was quickly apparent.

They wavered and recoiled, and the line began to roll. The commander of the battery redoubled his fire.

The Blues fired in steady volley, their bullets mowing the foe down in lines. The loss of the Confederates was becoming heavy.

The shot and shell from the battery made havoc. It was more than they could stand. They began to fall back in confusion.

In vain their officers tried to rally them. Jack ordered the Blues forward, and they fired at close range.

Back down the hill went the attacking Confederate line. They were repulsed.

Cheers rang from the artillerymen above. Cheers went

up from the Blues. Just then a troop of mounted men galloped up.

It was General Pope and his staff. He had witnessed the incident, and he congratulated the captain of the battery, and also the Blues.

"Hold your position here, boys," he said. "We are going to be attacked again. This is the enemy's objective point. I will send up reinforcements."

He galloped away, and now Jack decided upon a new move.

He conferred with the captain of the battery. The result was that along the side of the hill the Blues hastily threw up intrenchments.

The artillerymen drew their guns back and also threw up the earth to make a rough breastwork. This was destined to stop many a bullet and to be of great service to them.

Meanwhile the main body of the army had been moving up to meet the attack at this point.

Sharp engagements were taking place right and left. Fast firing was heard for a mile in either direction.

This indicated that the foe were evidently advancing in force, and it looked as if their purpose was to overwhelm Pope.

It was a move characteristic of the wily Beauregard.

Standing on the hillside, Jack now watched the rolling clouds of powder smoke all along the line, and said to Hal Martin:

"On my word, Hal, it looks dubious."

"So it does, Jack."

"I believe we are going to have another Shiloh. The country is just about the same, plenty of forest and bushes."

"Ugh! I hope not! I shall never forget that battle."

"It was a wicked one."

"So it was."

"Well, there is nothing for us to do but to stand our ground."

"That is right."

Just then a puff of smoke came from the woods below. Bullets came hissing up the slope. One cut a hole in Jack's coat sleeve.

He stepped back and gave the order for the Blues to come into the trenches.

"Answer their fire," he said to Hal. "Stop their advance now if you can."

The young lieutenant gave the order and fire leaped from the muzzles of the Blues' guns.

Volley after volley was poured into the woods, but it was not sufficient to stay the advance of the foe.

They surged from among the trees in an overpowering mass. There seemed to be thousands of them, and in such an overwhelming body that it did not seem as if the little force on the hill could possibly hold them in check.

Jack's face grew grave. He understood this full well, and he knew the odds were great.

But he knew what his orders were, and he was determined to stand by them to the last.

"Steady, boys!" he said, reassuringly. "We must drive them back once more."

But there was little need of saying anything to the Blues. They had been under fire so many times that this was a matter of philosophical sort to them.

They stood their ground as veterans should. Up the hillside the gray line again came surging.

The Blues now opened fire. The battery thundered, and a scene of desperate conflict ensued.

But up, up came the gray line. It was a desperate, awful moment.

Jack saw that the tide could not be turned. It seemed certain that it must become a hand-to-hand conflict.

In hard, set tones he gave the order:

"Fix bayonets!"

Not for a moment did the Blues falter, although they saw destruction and death close upon them. Not a man in the lines wavered.

With a rattle of steel the bayonets were fixed and bristled over the breastwork. Already Jack could see his little company being swept away and annihilated.

It seemed as if they were being made a sacrifice of. The boy captain wondered if they had been utterly forgotten by General Pope.

But, just at the critical moment a wild hurrah sounded in their rear.

Up over the ascent behind them surged a great blue line. Thousands were in that line.

Reinforcements had come just in time. It was a thrilling moment when they swept up, and, carrying the Blues with them, descended like a thunderbolt upon the line of gray.

The Confederates were hurled back as with giant hands. They retreated in the wildest confusion.

After them surged the victorious Union troops. Whole companies of the gray threw down their arms and surrendered. It was a tremendous triumph.

All along the line General Pope's victorious troops advanced. The Confederates, hurled back with tremendous force, were in full retreat.

It was a moment of great joy and triumph. It looked an easy matter to push straight on to Tupelo and perhaps even drive Beauregard once more from his works.

General Pope, than whom no abler fighter ever lived, rode up and down the field flushed with success. Night fell on the field of victory.

The tired, but successful Union troops rested on their arms.

Campfires blazed along the front of the army for miles. Soldiers rollicked and sang before the cheerful blaze.

Away in the darkness the Confederate hosts were falling back rapidly to their intrenchments.

In the morning it was intended to chase them further. General Pope was in his tent, surrounded by his staff, when Jack Clark went to report and to pay his respects.

"Ah, Clark!" cried General Pope, joyfully. "I am glad to see you. That was a brave stand you made."

"We tried to do our duty, sir."

"Well, you did, and you held the foe long enough to enable us to get reinforcements up. You are entitled to a great deal of credit."

"Thank you, General Pope."

"We have driven the enemy all along the line. I have sent to General Halleck a full report, and asking for another division to support me. To-morrow we will go on."

There was eager triumph and satisfaction in the faces of all present. But just then an orderly entered the tent.

He handed General Pope a packet.

"What is this," exclaimed the general, "dispatches from General Halleck?"

He opened them hastily and read them. As he did so a great cloud of disappointment came over his face. He shrugged his shoulders and coughed. His eyes blazed with disappointment and ill-restrained anger.

He flung the dispatches down upon the camp table and, arising, paced up and down for some moments, the victim of palpable emotions.

No one ventured to speak to him. After a while he paused, and his gaze roamed about the tent.

"Do you know what that means?" he asked, pointing to the scattered papers. "It means the demolition of our plans, the annulling of our great success. We are driving the enemy and dealing them mortal blows. At this moment, and while a great victory is within our grasp, we are ordered to fall back—to retreat!"

A great cry went up from all present:

"To retreat?"

It seemed incredible. A hush of dismay fell upon the party. One of the staff officers picked up the dispatches and read them.

"There is no recourse," he said. "The orders are from General Halleck and are imperative. But there may be a vital reason, unknown to us, for them."

General Pope, with a deep sigh, sank into his chair at the table. He did not speak again, but remained plunged in deep abstraction. It was plain that his disappointment was great.

CHAPTER XII.

THE NEGRO'S MESSAGE.

With the order to fall back of course all the plans of General Pope fell to the ground. Whatever thoughts that

officer may have had upon the subject, were never known, for he rapidly issued orders for the retreat.

What must have been a surprise for the Confederate forces occurred when the Union troops thus fell back.

It was necessary to establish an effective rearguard, and Jack Clark at once joined this.

The Blues fell in behind the retreating columns, and were engaged soon in repelling the incipient attacks by Forrest's cavalry, which hung on their rear like a swarm of wasps.

Back to Corinth marched the Union army under Pope. The rearguard, however, did not arrive until later.

The reason for this was due to a number of incidents, in which the Blues figured largely.

As the Blues were descending a slope to the banks of a creek the sound of firing was heard upon their right. What seemed to be a lively conflict was going on there.

Jack at once became interested.

He knew that a regiment of the rearguard, under Colonel Tom Judge, was covering that part of the retreat.

"Something going on over there, Jack," said Hal.

"I should say so! It sounds lively, don't it?"

"Yes."

"Supposing we investigate—will there be danger in leaving this part of the line?"

"I think we ought to find out if Judge needs reinforcements."

"So do I."

With Jack to think was to act. He quickly gave orders for his men to change front, and the Blues went forward on the double-quick.

In a few moments they arrived upon the scene, which was a thrilling one. Colonel Judge had been cut off in the rear by a troop of cavalry, and he was much beset.

At once, with a cheer, the Blues charged upon the enemy. They poured a volley into the ranks of the foe, and men tumbled from their horses, while Colonel Judge's troops, encouraged by the reinforcements, redoubled their efforts.

So that Forrest was hurled back and the regiment of Colonel Judge was able once more to advance.

The colonel, a fat, good-humored man, rode up and grasped Jack's hand.

"Clark, you're a wonder," he cried. "You always turn up in time. You saved us from a hard fight."

"I thought you might need help," said Jack, "so I came over."

"It was very thoughtful of you. By the way, we picked up an old negro back here who has been inquiring for you."

Jack gave a start.

"Indeed!" he exclaimed. "Where is he?"

"If I am not mistaken, he is still with us. I will inquire."

Judge turned and spoke to one of his officers, who rode away. In a few moments he returned.

Beside his horse rode a negro. Jack gave a start, for he now recalled having seen him before.

It was at Belle View. He had been butler at the plantation house. At sight of Jack he ambled forward eagerly.

"Massa, yo' is jes' de one Ise lookin' fo'," he cried. "De Lor' is good to dis ole nigger."

"Yes?" said Jack. "What do you want, my good man?"

"Ise brung a message from mah missus to yo'," said the negro. "Yo' done 'membah mah young missus at Belle View?"

"From Myrtle Vane!" muttered Jack, in surprise. He took the dainty envelope handed him by the negro. Jack broke the seal, and read:

"My Dear Captain Clark:—It is with much diffidence that I am constrained to appeal to you for aid in a matter of most distressing importance to me. You will remember that Jackson Wardell was under sentence of death in the Union lines a short while ago. He escaped by the strategy and daring work of a number of men employed by his father. At present he is hiding in a swamp near this place. My uncle is very much incensed at me still, and now declares that I shall marry his son Jackson. You may imagine with what horror and repugnance such a thought fills me. I am kept under close guard. I don't know that this message will ever reach you.

"But if it does, I beg you to come to my rescue, if you can feel sufficient interest in my case. I am convinced my uncle intends to force me into this hateful marriage. I must have my liberty, for upon me alone depends the hope of saving the life of young Lieutenant Cameron, who is innocent of the charge against him. I shall try to escape and make my way to the Union lines. I feel sure I can convince General Halleck that Lieutenant Cameron must not die. He must be saved. Come to me at once, in the name of humanity. The bearer of this will guide you.

"With much anxiety, MYRTLE VANE."

Jack read this epistle twice, and his bosom thrilled. He handed it to Colonel Judge, who also read it with deep interest.

"Captain Clark, I have always been convinced that Cameron was innocent," he said.

"Of course he is," said Jack. "But he will be shot, unless something is done."

"What will you do?"

"There is but one course; I must answer this letter in person."

"Good for you! I wish I could go with you, but it is necessary for me to remain at my post here."

"It is also my duty," said Jack. "I cannot take my whole company. I will take a small detachment. I wish I had horses——"

"Horses!" exclaimed Colonel Judge. "A dozen or more were captured in that last cavalry charge."

Jack gave a start of joy.

"You are right," he cried; "I never thought of that. It will fix me all right. Where is this negro? Here, Sambo, I want your help."

"A' right, massa," cried the negro, eagerly. "Yo' is gwine to answer my lily missus, is yo'?"

"Yes," replied Jack, "I would answer her if it was to go through fire and water. She shall be rescued."

The negro cut a double shuffle with delight. It did not take Jack long to materialize his plans.

The captured horses were quickly brought up, and the Blues mounted to the number of eight, which was, as Jack deemed it, a sufficient detachment.

Then the young captain charged Hal Martin with the command of the Blues during the rest of the retreat.

"Now, Sambo," he said to the negro, as they mounted, "where are you going to take us? Forrest and his men are over in the woods yonder."

The old coon rolled his eyes.

"Yo', done leave dat to me, massa," he said. "I neber let Forrest git yo', don' yo' fo'git it. Dis chile knows de way, all right."

"Wait a moment. Where is your mistress at this moment?"

"She am ober in Grand Isle, sah."

"Where is that?"

"Dat am an island in de swamp, where ole Marse Wardell went to hide when de Yankees came. I show yo' de way, all right. Nobody else eber find it."

"All right," agreed the young captain. "You look as if you were reliable, my man. If there is any treachery——"

The negro rolled his eyes wildly.

"Don' yo' fink dat ob dis chile. Ain' yo' got de lily missus' note dere fo' to mek suah?"

"That's right," agreed Jack. "I believe you're all right, Sambo. Now you ride ahead."

In the little cavalcade Jack had included one resourceful member, and that was Corporal Tom Peters. He was a shrewd, genial and plucky fellow, and one to be depended upon in an emergency.

Along the rear of the Union army they rode for some ways. Then the negro guide suddenly turned into a path, which led down through a deep ravine.

In a few moments they were beyond the Union line.

The negro rode on ahead, peering right and left through the trees. Once he halted and went ahead on foot to reconnoiter.

It was plain that the country was to him like a printed book. He returned, and, with much reassurance, again led the way.

Now they emerged into lowlands. The distant waters of a bayou were seen. About this extended a mighty tract of swamp.

This was called Grand Isle, as Jack now remembered.

Far in the distance, along a highway by the bayou, could be seen the marching columns of a Confederate regiment. Jack shrugged his shoulders.

"We are well out of their way," he said. "I am glad of that."

"We are lucky on that point," said Tom Peters. "They'd have hard work to catch us now."

The negro grinned and shook his woolly head.

"Yo' is all safe like now," he said. "Dey kain't catch yo', I done promise yo', dis time. We be in de swamp in a few minutes now."

The Blues soon struck into a rough trail and now were in the dark recesses of the swamp.

CHAPTER XIII.

IN THE SWAMP.

Jack's nerves tingled as they rode on now through the corduroy trail of the swamp.

It chanced that this was only one road of an absolute maze. To the old negro, however, the course was plain.

Unerringly he led the way through the dark depths. Past slimy, oozing bogs, over fallen logs and decaying trees, under arches of trailing vines and black cypresses. On, and finally the barking of a hound was heard.

Sambo now came to a halt.

He pointed ahead, and said:

"Mebbe yo' bettah go ahead now, sah. Ole Marse Wardell, if he see dis chile, he shoot him dead."

Jack saw the point.

"All right, Sambo," he said, readily. "Protect yourself, by all means, but I'll see that he don't do anything of the kind."

So Sambo fell back to the rear. The little detachment kept on, and suddenly into the trail bounded a huge bloodhound.

The dog made a fierce leap and fastened his fangs into the neck of Tom Peters' horse.

The animal plunged, and nearly unseated his rider.

Jack, quick as a flash, drew his pistol and fired. The bullet penetrated the dog's brain, and he fell back, quivering in the moss.

A snarling cry of rage burst upon the air, and out into the swamp road stepped Wardell.

The planter's face was purple, and he held a rifle under his arm. He glanced at Jack and his companions savagely.

"What did you shoot that dog for?" he demanded. "It is an outrage."

"I shot the dog to save the life of the horse," said Jack, coldly. "The animal was not held in restraint, as he should have been."

"What business have you in here, anyway?" demanded the planter, angrily. "This is private property."

"Evidently," said Jack, with sarcasm. "A valuable property, as well, especially when one wishes to go into hiding."

"It's the only thing to do when the country is overridden by Yankees like you."

"See here, Wardell," said Jack, dismounting, "I object to such a reference. You have escaped mercifully heretofore. I consider that you have been treated better than you deserve. Now I shall take you away from here as a prisoner, if you are not more civil."

The planter's eyes glittered.

"What brought you in here? What do you want?"

"We have come to straighten out a little matter concerning your niece."

"My niece?"

Wardell quivered with passion.

"You can go back the way you came," he declared. "She is a treacherous and ungrateful hussy. She need expect no more favors at my hands."

"On the other hand, she is not to suffer the fate you propose for her, of marrying your rascally son."

"See here," gritted Wardell, "what is all this to you? What right have you to meddle in family affairs of mine?"

"You shall soon discover," said Jack, coolly. "Boys, seize him and tie him up."

In an instant Tom Peters and several of the Blues, dismounting, sprung forward. Wardell attempted resistance, but he was overpowered.

Gnashing his teeth and raving in a furious fashion, he was led along the corduroy road, until a little sandy knoll, covering several acres in the swamp, was reached.

Here were built a number of cabins. In one of these the planter and his family had found refuge.

Certainly they might have counted upon absolute safety during the whole course of the war, so far as discovery was concerned, had it not been for the clever work of Sambo.

A troop of negro servants came rushing out as the Blues rode into the clearing.

They swarmed about the "Yankees" in their simple way, looking upon them as deliverers. They began to sing gospel hymns and exhort until Sambo drove them all back vociferously.

The old negro now came forward, and Jack said:

"Well, Sambo, we have come in answer to the call of your young mistress. Where is she?"

The old negro looked puzzled. He ran to the cabin. Then from one to another of the structures he went.

But Myrtle Vane was not there. She was not to be found.

Wardell watched all with lowering glances. Finally he vouchsafed information:

"If you are looking for my niece, I can tell you that she is not here."

"What!" exclaimed Jack. "You have sent her away?"

"No," replied the planter, in a manner that was convincing, "I have not sent her away."

"Where is she then?"

"I do not know."

"Wardell," said Jack, plainly, "this is no time for trifling. I have come here to see your niece, and I demand that you tell me where she is."

Wardell shrugged his shoulders.

"You may demand and be hanged," he averred. "I can't tell you anything about her. She has run away with her negro mammy."

Jack looked into the old planter's eyes and saw that he was telling the truth. It gave him a shock.

"You held her in restraint here?" he asked.

"I had a right to discipline her. She was obdurate."

"You sought to compel her to marry your son."

"Her future would be assured," said the planter. "I am rich, and my son will inherit my property."

"But it was against her will."

"A girl of her cut never knows what is best for her. But I'm sick of the whole business. I wash my hands of her. I am done."

It was plain that Wardell meant what he said. Jack could see the whole truth now.

Doubtless the young girl, with the assistance of her negro mammy, had made her escape. She was probably ere this far on her way to interview General Halleck and intercede for the life of Lieutenant Cameron.

With all this plainly evident, Jack was for a moment puzzled to know what to do.

He had intended to hold Wardell as a prisoner on the charge of holding a commission in the Confederate army. But now he could see little to be gained by this.

He knew that the planter was too old to serve actively in the army. He was, to a certain extent, a noncombatant. Little would be gained by installing him in the already overcrowded prison pen.

"Wardell," he asked, sharply, "where is your son?"

The planter's eyes shone with a cunning light.

"That is for you to discover," he said. "You would come down here and rob an old man of the only comfort left him in this life. Find him, if you can. I'll tell you that you can't."

He chuckled in a triumphant fashion. But Jack was not yet satisfied. He caused a thorough search of the place to be made.

But not a trace of the spy or of the planter's fair niece could be found. Jack now conferred with the negro, Sambo.

"What do you think of it, Sambo?" asked Jack. "What ought we to do?"

The negro shook his head.

"I dunno, sah, it am berry funny."

"You believe that your mistress has left here, do you?"

"Oh, yes, sah! De oder coons dey all tell me dat brack Sarah hab gone wif her. I done fink she hab gone to de Union lines, sah."

"So do I," said Jack.

He turned to the guards who held Wardell. His mind was made up.

"Set him free!" he said.

The order was obeyed. The planter seemed astonished.

"Wardell," said Jack, in sharp tones, "I am not going to turn you over to our provost guard, as you deserve. I am going to let you go. But I warn you that any attempt to injure your niece or the young officer whom she loves, will be known to me, and I will see that you are dealt with for it. That's all!"

Wardell made no reply. He stood motionless and sullen as the little detachment rode away into the swamp again.

It is needless to say that Sambo, the negro, accompanied the Blues. He was not so rash as to remain with Wardell.

In due time the detachment crept out of the swamp.

They emerged into the open country just as the sun began to set. Jack looked warily about for any possible sign of a foe.

But none was visible. So the Blues gave spurs to their horses and galloped away.

Sambo, the negro, rode with Jack. On galloped the troop, until they entered the deep ravine, through which they had passed once before.

Then they suddenly drew rein. There was reason for this.

Right in their path a swarm of gray-uniformed soldiers had sprung up. Rifles were pointed at them. A stern voice shouted:

"Stand and surrender! You are all surrounded!"

For a moment Jack Clark was dumbfounded. He could see that they were outnumbered, five to one. But the Confederates were not mounted.

Daring thoughts coursed like lightning through Jack Clark's active brain. Something must be done. He could not submit to capture.

It was too hard a thing to think of. But what could be done?

He decided to temporize, until a plan could suggest itself. So he said:

"One moment! Are you friend or foe?"

The question seemed to surprise the Confederate officer, who stood at one side in the gloom.

"We are Confederate soldiers. You wear the uniform of the blue, so we must be enemies."

"Granted! If we surrender, what terms will you give us?"

"The privileges of prisoners of war."

Jack saw that a file of Confederates had begun to close

in behind him. If he had had his whole company with him surrender would have been the last thing to consider.

But ten men against hundreds was too great odds. For the first time in his life Jack Clark was confronted by an exigency which he could not handle.

CHAPTER XIV.

IN WHICH THE CHASE IS ENDED.

The word surrender did not ring pleasantly in Jack Clark's ears. But there were many things to consider.

He had really no right to sacrifice the lives of his comrades in a mad dash for liberty.

"Well, sir," asked the Confederate officer, "is it surrender or fight? You are covered by a hundred muskets."

One volley would wipe them out. Of course it was folly, even madness, to attempt resistance.

So Jack unsheathed his sword.

"We surrender," he said. "May I ask to whom?"

"Colonel Lee Blanchard, of the Missouri Home Guard," replied the officer, courteously. "May I ask the same question?"

"I am Captain Jack Clark, of the Fairdale Blues."

"What!" he cried. "Am I so greatly honored? Your fame has traveled even to the headquarters of our army. General Beauregard has spoken of you and your dashing work with the advance guard."

"It is very gratifying to know that the enemy appreciates one's efforts," said Jack.

"In your case it may be. We know of no officer of your rank who enjoys the fame you do on both sides of the line."

"I am afraid I am overrated," said Jack. "I would like to ask you a question, Colonel Blanchard."

"Well?"

"Will you grant me a favor? I feel sure you will, when you know that it is in the interest of one of the fair sex."

"Indeed, I should lack the elements of a true man if I should refuse under such conditions. What is the favor?"

"I would like you to detach this colored man and give him his liberty. He is the servant of Miss Myrtle Vane, a young niece of Colonel Jim Wardell, who is waiting for him."

"Miss Vane!" he exclaimed. "Why, I know the young woman well. I visited at Belle View but a short time before the Union advance."

"Then perhaps you know her romance—that she loves a certain young officer in our army named Cameron?"

Colonel Blanchard whistled softly.

"Indeed I remember Cameron. I met him once at the plantation. I know the whole story. Wardell objected to Cameron's suit. The war broke out, and so the romance was terminated."

"Not yet!"

"What?"

"It has simply assumed a new phase."

"I should like you to explain."

So Jack gave Colonel Blanchard the whole story of Myrtle's captivity in the swamp, of her escape, and the likelihood that she was now on her way to save her lover.

It interested the Confederate colonel and aroused his sympathies.

"My whole sympathy is with Miss Vane," he said. "Certainly, her negro servant has his liberty, if he desires it. I will see——"

Colonel Blanchard never finished the sentence. Suddenly the evening air was broken with the rattle of musketry. Cheers came up the ravine. Colonel Blanchard whipped out his sword, crying:

"Post guard here! Hold the prisoners. Deploy for defense! We are attacked, but hold your ground, boys!"

The Confederate regiment made an attempt to deploy, but they were not in time.

Down through the gloom came masses of blue infantry. The air of the gorge was broken with the roar of muskets.

A sharp and desperate fight followed. Colonel Blanchard's men were driven back like sheep.

An effort was made to take the prisoners to the rear. But a line of blue surged in about them, and in a moment Jack Clark and his men again had their freedom.

It need hardly be said that it was welcome to them.

The Confederates were driven down the ravine in a motley crowd. In a few moments the Union troops had command of the situation.

And Jack Clark found himself face to face with a tall man of imposing mien who wore colonel's shoulderstraps.

"Who are you?" demanded the colonel.

"I am Captain Jack Clark, of the Fairdale Blues, and I left my company a few hours ago with this detachment upon a special mission."

"Captain Clark?" cried the colonel, warmly. "Don't you know me? Don't you remember Captain Bugbee, of the Iowa brigade? I am now colonel."

"Indeed, I remember you!" cried Jack. "We fought side by side at Donelson."

"And won."

"Yes."

"Captain Clark, I can report to you that your company is but a few miles away on our left. We are falling back to Corinth."

"Which is a mistake."

"So I think. We might press on and drive Beauregard to the end of the earth."

"So I think."

"It only serves as further illustration of the fact that officers in the field can better discern a telling blow than any commander who is at a distance."

"I believe it."

But Jack was glad to hear from his command, and felt anxious to rejoin them. So he thanked Colonel Bugbee warmly, and then marshalling his little detachment once more marched away.

This time they galloped on toward the Union lines.

It was not long before their campfires were seen. Suddenly a sharp hail went up: "Halt! Who goes there?"

"Friends!" replied Jack, as he pulled in his horse. "What division is this?"

"General Pope's division," was the reply. Then a sharp cry of recognition and delight went up.

"Captain Clark! Hooray! Don't you know me? I'm Jim Lard, one of your own company of Blues!"

It was true. Jack had hit upon one of his own pickets. It is needless to say that he and his companions quickly rode into camp.

It was a joyous reunion that followed. Hal Martin had a matter of importance to report to Jack.

"Here is a dispatch from General Halleck," he said. "We are ordered back to Corinth."

Jack took the dispatch and read, with eager interest:

"HEADQUARTERS, ARMY OF THE TENNESSEE,
CORINTH, MISSISSIPPI.

"MY DEAR CLARK:—

"Immediately on receipt of this march your company of Blues back to Corinth, as I have special work for you. As I wish to see you personally, at once, I wish you would ride hither as fast as horseflesh will bring you. Let your company follow later.

"Signed: HALLECK, General Comm'd'g."

Jack crumpled the dispatch in his hand and, turning to Hal, said: "You see what is wanted?"

"Yes."

"Will you take charge of the company and carry out the order?"

"I will."

Jack went out and selected his own horse. In a few moments he was in the saddle.

Away he galloped, taking fences and ditches, until he reached the Corinth road.

Here he sat down to ride hard. On, down the great highway, he rode.

But his progress was delayed at times. In places the road was choked with baggage trains.

In other places he was halted by outposts and guards, and it was not until the morning light finally broke in the east that he entered Corinth.

Jack flung himself from his horse, and at once strode up to General Halleck's headquarters. Despite the early hour the great general was astir.

Aides and orderlies were flying hither and thither. A line of waiting officers stood outside the tent.

So Jack had to wait some time before he was admitted to

the presence of General Halleck. As he entered, though, the general greeted him with a warm smile.

"Ah, Clark, you got my dispatch all right?"

"Yes, General Halleck, and I have answered as quickly as possible."

"Very good," said the general. "I see that you made quite a success of your expedition under Pope."

"Yes, sir."

"Do you think the way was clear to advance to Tupelo?"

"It seemed to be. I could see no hindrance."

"Well, there was," said Halleck, with a smile. "We have to guard against Price and Van Dorn coming down in our rear from Iuka."

Jack gave a start. His face flushed. He had not thought of this. Perhaps, after all, the order to retreat was warranted.

However this matter was, it was dropped on the instant, for General Halleck changed the subject.

"You heard of the escape of the spy, young Wardell?"

"I did, sir."

"You also know that Lieutenant Cameron was placed under arrest?"

"I heard of it, sir."

"In your opinion, was he guilty of collusion in that affair?"

"No, sir!"

Jack spoke sharply and positively. General Halleck frowned, and Jack hastened to revise his speech.

"I do not think he is, sir."

"Yet you know that he was requested by this young woman whom he loved to assist in the job?"

"That was not true, as I have learned," declared Jack.

"How did you learn it?"

"From her own lips."

"Ah! Then you have seen her?"

"Yes; at Belle View plantation."

General Halleck turned and rapped on the table with the hilt of his sword. An orderly appeared.

General Halleck made a comprehensive sign. The orderly disappeared. A moment later into the tent, pale, but erect and proud and beautiful as a dream, there walked Myrtle Vane.

She stood a moment, and then her gaze rested upon Jack. With a little, glad cry she stepped forward and Jack took her hands.

"I answered your call for aid, but you were gone," he said.

"I shall be always grateful to you," she said. "Now I know you will verify my story, which General Halleck has seen fit to doubt."

The general arose and bowed very low.

"Miss Vane, I am proud to serve you," he said, gallantly. "I want to assure you that your story is believed now, and that your troubles are over."

General Halleck snapped his fingers. A fold in the inner tent opened. Two armed guards entered. Between them strode a young and handsome officer, no other than Lieutenant Cameron.

His gaze rested upon the girl he loved, and the transformation was thrilling. He started forward, with an eager cry:

"Myrtle!"

The young girl also started forward. General Halleck stepped between them, with a motion of his hand, to dismiss the guard.

"Cameron," he said, "you have stood upon the threshold of death. You are a lucky dog, as I can see by the light in this young woman's eyes. I place her hand in yours, and I order you to be kind to her, or by the great Jupiter, I'll have you hanged for it."

There was a laugh, and the two young people stood, happy and foolish, in the tent.

"Clark, I want to see you outside," said General Halleck, drawing Jack outside the tent. The young people were thus left alone. When Jack and the general returned, Lieutenant Cameron stepped forward, and said:

"General, I do not like to ask for a furlough at this hour, but if I can be excused for this day, before night the knot will be tied, which will make me the happiest man on earth."

General Halleck put up his hands.

"Bless you, my children," he said. "You are excused for ten days, Cameron. By that time you must be back with your regiment."

So ended the little romance. Lieutenant and Mrs. Cameron were met often by Jack Clark after that, and they remained the warmest of friends.

In due time the Blues arrived in Corinth. It was not long, however, before General Grant returned to relieve General Halleck, and the southward march was again resumed.

Great battles were in store in the new campaign, and the part taken by the Blues and their brave young captain in them will form the subject matter of a future story.

THE END.

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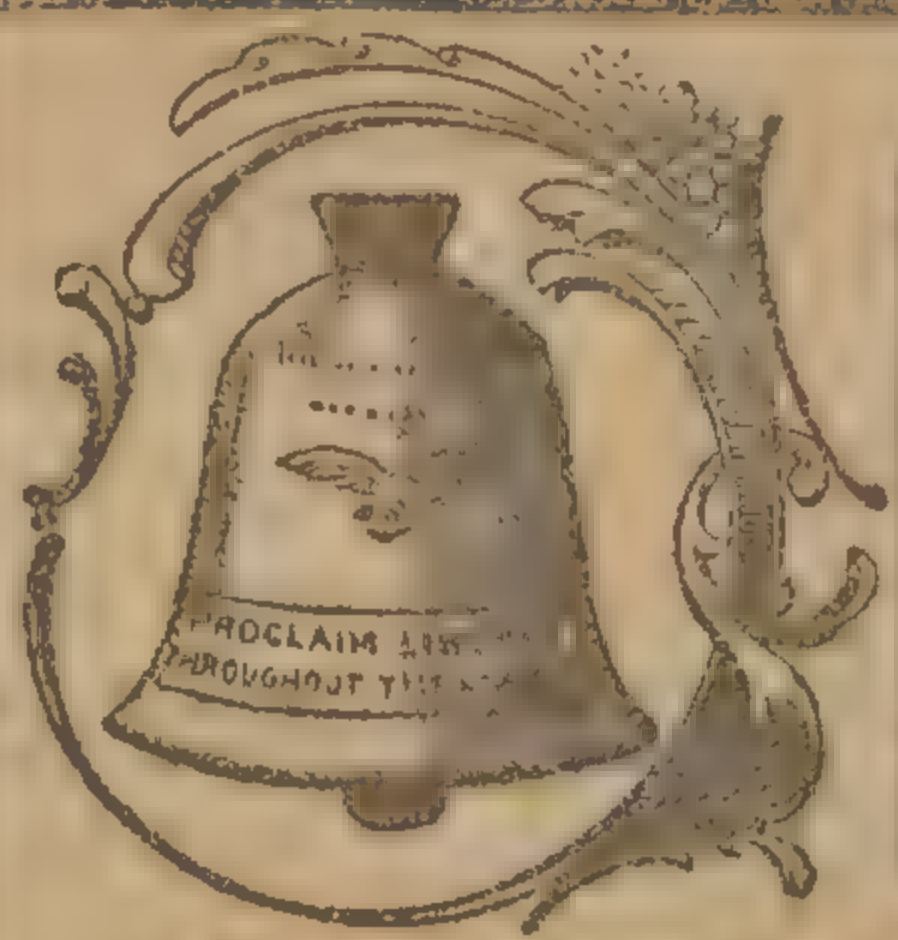
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